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Hannah Rose Blakeley April 15, 2015

Breaking the Cycle:
From Naturalism to Epic
in Käthe Kollwitz's *A Weavers' Rebellion* (1893-97)

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Abstract

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This honors thesis examines a cycle, or series of images, entitled *A Weavers' Rebellion* (*Ein Weberaufstand*, 1893-97) by Käthe Kollwitz, a German nineteenth- and twentieth-century draftsman, printmaker, and sculptor. Research on Kollwitz has been relatively limited, particularly in recent years, and most scholars consider her work within a reductively feminist paradigm, interpreting her art in ways that emphasize her biography, motherhood, and womanness instead of the artistic qualities and intricacies of her prints. In this thesis I offer a different kind of scholarly engagement with Kollwitz and her works, closely examining a set of her images and discussing their significance in terms of contextually relevant theatrical and cultural sources and theories. While recognizing the importance of Kollwitz's identity as a woman artist, I hope to convey in this project that the visual content of her prints and their direct influences constitute sufficient material for analysis without needing to invariably situate them within, or connect them to, details of her biography.

Kollwitz based her *Weavers' Rebellion* cycle on a play by Gerhart Hauptmann (1862-1946) called *The Weavers* (*Die Weber*, 1893), which dramatizes the Silesian weavers' rebellion of the 1840s. I use scholarly discussions of Hauptmann's work by the playwright Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) and the literary critic Peter Szondi (1929-1971) to analyze the ways in which Kollwitz's cycle represents these workers. An initial consideration of both Hauptmann's *The Weavers* and Kollwitz's *A Weavers' Rebellion* suggests dominant readings of the works as tragic and Naturalist, evoking feelings of empathy and pity that purge audiences of reactive feelings and do nothing to liberate the workers from their conditions. Further examination of both play and cycle, however, exposes epic aspects that explicitly engage contemporary contexts and reveal social structures responsible for the workers' oppression. This interdisciplinary project relies on critical theory, philosophy, and art historical methods to provide a long warranted, in-depth analysis of Kollwitz's images.

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Introduction

Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945), a German draftsman and printmaker, produced art during the late nineteenth century through the end of World War II that continues to engage and inspire international audiences. Scholars often describe Kollwitz's work as "universal" and "humanitarian,"[1] as well as emotionally and politically provocative. The artist most frequently depicts the suffering of the working class, the horrors of war, mother-child relationships, self-portraiture, and confrontations with death, and she executes these subjects almost exclusively through print media: drawing, lithography, etching, and woodcut. Kollwitz often structures her images in the form of cycles, collections of multiple prints linked narratively or thematically and designated as a unit by way of a collective title. Despite Kollwitz's association with contemporaries such as Edvard Munch and Max Klinger, her art refuses easy generic classification and displays characteristics of Expressionism, Naturalism, and Social Realism.

One of Kollwitz's primary interests lay in creating artworks whose emotional and political messages would remain accessible to a larger public audience. In her *Diary and Letters*, edited by her son Hans and translated into English in 1955, the artist communicates her sentiments regarding the necessary comprehensibility of her art, writing, "Art for the average spectator need not be shallow. . . . I thoroughly agree that

[1] See Elizabeth Prelinger, "Kollwitz Reconsidered," in *Käthe Kollwitz*, ed. Elizabeth Prelinger (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, Washington / New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 13; "The Cover," *JAMA: Journal of the American Medical Association* 292, no. 5 (2004): 536; Jean Owens Schaefer, "Kollwitz in America: A Study of Reception, 1900-1960," *Woman's Art Journal* 15, no. 1 (1994): 29; Carl Zigrosser, *Käthe Kollwitz* (New York: H. Bittner and Company, 1946), 13.

there must be understanding between the artist and the people."[2] Kollwitz's desire for clear artistic communication, achieved through decisions involving both technique and subject matter, resulted in her works' enduring popular reception, which extends beyond the Western world and into China, Russia, and East Central Europe.[3]

In addition to museums in Cologne and Berlin that are entirely dedicated to Kollwitz's art, museums throughout the United States have displayed her work since 1937,[4] including more recent exhibitions at the National Gallery of Art in Washington (1963, 1970, and 1992) and at New York's Brooklyn Museum in 2013. Many German and Austrian cities have named streets or parks after Kollwitz—*Kollwitzstraße*, *Kollwitzplatz, Käthe-Kollwitz-Park* in Berlin and *Kollwitzgasse* in Graz, for example—and her work continues to influence artists in a variety of disciplines, ranging from political cartoonists, such as Frances Jetter,[5] to poets like Muriel Rukeyser and Gail Peck. The enduring relevance of Kollwitz's work speaks to its communicative, emotional, political, and artistic strength.

Biography

Käthe Kollwitz, née Schmidt, was born in Königsberg, East Prussia (now Kaliningrad, Russia), in 1867. Her grandfather, Julius Rupp, founded and served as the first minister of the Free Religious Congregation in Königsberg, an office that her father later filled. The family valued literature, theatre, and the arts, and Kollwitz describes how

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[2] Hans Kollwitz, ed., *Diary and Letters of Kaethe Kollwitz* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1955), 68.
[3] Elizabeth Prelinger, "Kollwitz Reconsidered," 13.
[4] Prelinger, *Käthe Kollwitz*, 83n1.
[5] Victor S. Navasky, *The Art of Controversy: Political Cartoons and their Enduring Power* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2013), 94.

her parents encouraged their children to read, draw, and pursue any activity at which they demonstrated talent.[6] When Kollwitz's father discovered her artistic ability, he ensured that she received an education that would support and develop her talents. Kollwitz began studying with the engraver Rudolf Mauer in Königsberg when she was fourteen, continuing her education with Karl Stauffer-Bern at the Women's Academy Berlin and, a couple of years later, with Ludwig von Herterich at the Women's Academy in Munich.[7] When Kollwitz returned home from Berlin in 1887, she became engaged to family friend and Social Democrat Karl Kollwitz, who continued to support Käthe's artistic vocation over the duration of their marriage. Kollwitz's father, surprised at the early engagement and concerned that it would interrupt his daughter's artistic career, encouraged her to return to Munich to resume her studies with von Herterich at the Women's Academy. Two years later she married Kollwitz, and the couple moved to Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin, where Karl opened a medical practice for a workers' health insurance group.[8] Karl and Käthe had their first son, Hans, in May 1892, and their second, Peter, in February 1896. For several years after Peter's birth, Kollwitz taught etching and drawing at the Women's Academy in Berlin, and in 1901 she joined the Berlin Secession movement. Kollwitz travelled to Paris occasionally and, after receiving the Villa Romana Fellowship award in 1907, spent several months in Florence. The artist helped to found the Women's Art Association in 1913, served as first chairwoman for ten years, and was the first woman member of the Prussian Academy of Arts.

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[6] Kollwitz, *Diary and Letters*, 25.
[7] "The Artist – Timeline," Käthe Kollwitz Museum Köln, accessed December 14, 2014, http://www.kollwitz.de/en/zeitstrahl.aspx.
[8] Alessandra Comini, "Kollwitz in Context: The Formative Years," in *Käthe Kollwitz*, ed. Elizabeth Prelinger (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, Washington / New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 94.

In 1914 Käthe and Karl's son Peter died in battle after having volunteered for the war effort. The artist's work after this loss signals a turn from her belief in the necessity of violent revolution towards pacifism and the anti-war effort, as exemplified by works such as the *War* cycle (1921-22) and *Never Again War!* (1924). After Peter's death Kollwitz began work on a memorial sculpture for him with which she struggled for decades. The artist completed the memorial, *The Grieving Parents*, in 1932 and installed it in the Belgian military cemetery Roggevelde, where Peter was buried.[9] When Peter's remains moved to the Vladslo German war cemetery in 1955, the memorial followed.[10]

During the Third Reich and Hitler's ascendancy, Kollwitz's reputation in Germany suffered. The socialist themes of her art led to Nazi condemnation of her work as "degenerate." The Prussian Academy of Arts in Berlin had appointed Kollwitz as the head of master atelier prints in 1928, and in 1933 Nazi officials forced her to resign. They placed an indirect ban on her art as well, removing her works from exhibitions in the spring of 1935 and in the winter of 1935-36. Around this time a newspaper in Moscow published an article based on an interview with Kollwitz, which led to the Gestapo's interrogation of the artist and threats of internment in a concentration camp. Despite the attacks and negative attention, Kollwitz remained in Berlin and continued to produce art. Karl died in 1940, inspiring Kollwitz's creation of a bronze relief, *Lamentation*, and two years later, her grandson Peter (child of her other son, Hans) died in action while fighting in Russia. When WWII bombs destroyed her Berlin apartment, Kollwitz moved to Moritzburg on the invitation of Prince Henry of Saxony and died there on April 22, 1945, only a few days before the end of the war.

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[9] "Tour – A Weavers Revolt," Käthe Kollwitz Museum Köln, accessed December 14, 2014, http://www.kollwitz.de/en/lebenslauf.aspx.
[10] "The Artist – Timeline," Käthe Kollwitz Museum Köln.

Kollwitz and Feminism: Beyond Biography

In her art Kollwitz frequently depicts women and themes of motherhood. The artist's recurring attention to these subjects, along with her identity and perspective as a woman, has resulted in an extensive body of literature by numerous scholars who classify her work as feminist. The majority of these texts operate within a limited definition of feminism, however, qualifying Kollwitz's art as feminist based almost entirely on her regular depiction of female subjects—often in the form of self-portraiture—and of situations typically understood as experienced by women (e.g., depicting a war effort through images of the home front or a group of women protecting children from threats of violence).

Many of Kollwitz's most well known works illustrate such subjects: mothers mourning or protecting children, struggling with death, or finding themselves incapable of providing nourishment. *Woman with Dead Child*, a 1903 etching, for example, features a mother clasping her son's lifeless body. She sits hunched, animal-like, with crossed legs and her nose buried in the curve between the boy's shoulder and chin. This etching, for which Peter modeled, eerily foreshadows his death a decade later. *Woman with Dead Child* also exemplifies the artist's intentions to evoke clear, visceral emotion in "a stark black and white language of signs that would be universally understood."[11] Other artworks depict *Pietà*-like mothers with dying children in their laps (*Woman with Child in Lap*, drawing, 1916; *Hunger,* woodcut, 1923; *Pietà*, bronze, 1937-39) or women unable to feed or house their children, such as *Municipal Lodging* (lithograph, 1926) and *Bread!* (lithograph, 1924). Images of motherhood and of strong female characters in action occupy a vast expanse of prints and sculptures that Kollwitz produced in her

[11] Prelinger, "Kollwitz Reconsidered," 59.

lifetime, spanning from her earliest lithographs—*Storming the Gate* from *A Weavers' Rebellion* cycle (1893-97), for example—to her monumental completion of *The Grieving Parents* (granite, 1932) and her anti-war posters, such as *Seed for the Sowing Must not be Ground* (lithograph, 1941), which portrays a mother struggling to shelter a group of children under her protective arms.

These images of mothers and children often overlap with Kollwitz's graphic anti-war statements. For example, most scholars interpret Kollwitz's *War* cycle (woodcuts, 1921-22), with its images of youths volunteering to fight followed by those of grieving parents, as indicative of the artist's attempt to grapple with themes of motherhood and to document women's witness to war. In fact, accounts of Kollwitz's work frequently operate within the assumption that her art "concentrat[es] on what is generally considered woman's realm of experience, either because of social pressures or personal choice."[12] These expectations that Kollwitz's work reveals a visibly gendered perspective on subjects of war, social justice, parenthood, and society in general infuse most—and certainly the most comprehensive—analyses of the artist's oeuvre.

Many scholars credit the feminist movements of the 1970s and 80s for their role in reestablishing Kollwitz as a publically recognized artist of significance. The critical mass of texts written about Kollwitz grew significantly during and after these decades; numerous collections of Expressionist, Naturalist, and twentieth-century art—particularly those published in the earlier 1900s—make little or no reference to Kollwitz and her work, due largely, it is often argued, to her position as a woman in the artistic community. In a 1994 article entitled "Kollwitz in America: A Study of Reception, 1900-1960," Jean

[12] Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists: 1550-1950* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art / New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1976), 59.

Owens Schaefer tracks the evolution of the artist's popularity in the United States, arriving at the conclusion that "the rise of social movements and especially the resurgence of feminism fostered a renewed appreciation of Kollwitz."[13] Ingrid Sharp similarly acknowledges that Kollwitz "has attracted the positive interest of feminist historians and art critics, with monographs by [Martha] Kearns in 1976, [Catherine] Krahmer in 1981, and an essay by [Alessandra] Comini in 1982 that highlights the discriminatory, gendered nature of art reception."[14] As Schaefer's and Sharp's essays indicate, feminist interest in Kollwitz yielded an emergence of books and essays in the late twentieth century dedicated to her art and its gendered dimensions.

In the 1970s Kollwitz began appearing more frequently in art historical survey books and in large catalogues filled with reproductions of her work. These volumes, often organized to promote feminist aims, include *Women Artists: 1550-1950*, by Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin (1976); *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, edited by Norma Broude and Mary Garrard (1982); *The Print in Germany 1880-1933: The Age of Expressionism* by Frances Carey and Anthony Griffiths (1984); *Three Berlin Artists of the Weimar Era: Hannah Höch, Käthe Kollwitz, Jeanne Mammen* by Louise Noun (1994); as well as several books dedicated entirely to Kollwitz's work, comprised of short introductions followed by reprinted sheets of images. *Käthe Kollwitz: Life in Art* by Mina C. and H. Arthur Klein, a combination biography-catalogue of Kollwitz, appeared in 1972, and in 1976, Martha Kearns published *Käthe Kollwitz: Woman and Artist* with the Feminist Press. Kearns's book remains the most recent single-author monograph on the artist; essays and exhibition catalogues—most prominently that

[13] Schaefer, "Kollwitz in America," 33.
[14] Ingrid Sharp, "Käthe Kollwitz's Witness to War: Gender, Authority, and Reception," *Women in German Yearbook* 27 (2011): 87-88.

of the National Gallery, Washington, edited by Elizabeth Prelinger in 1994—bear somewhat more recent dates of publication.

While feminist momentum proved necessary in reintroducing Kollwitz to the Western world, the movement's consequential close association with her art has resulted in a vast majority of interpretations that continue to consider Kollwitz's work as primarily concerned with or influenced by aspects of her womanhood. Harris suggests that "the creative self as a woman could play an important role" in Kollwitz's art and choice of subject,[15] while Noun asserts, "It is clear that her images insistently depict her concern over the lives and fates of women."[16] Kearns defends her book as the first account "written from a contemporary female perspective" and subtitles the biography "*Woman* and Artist" (my emphasis), privileging Kollwitz's womanhood above her identity as artist. Alessandra Comini, in an essay entitled "Gender or Genius? The Women Artists of German Expressionism," succeeds in highlighting qualities of Kollwitz's art that have no relation to her gender, such as her commitment to depicting human experience, her skill in graphic media, and her representation of both world wars.[17] Kollwitz's reason for inclusion in the article, however, resides in her female identity: Comini alludes to prominent women artists in order to challenge the traditionally male-dominated genre of Expressionism.

Gendered analyses dominated criticism and scholarship on Kollwitz's work in the early twentieth century, as well. Mary White's 1913 article published in New York's *The*

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[15] Harris and Nochlin, *Women Artists*, 59.
[16] Louise R. Noun, *Three Berlin Artists of the Weimar Era: Hannah Höch, Käthe Kollwitz, Jeanne Mammen* (Iowa: Des Moines Art Center, 1994), 54.
[17] Alessandra Comini, "Gender or Genius? The Women Artists of German Expressionism," in *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1982), 273.

Evening Post responds to the "emotional content of [Kollwitz's] work" that "could scarcely come from a masculine artist. . . . The power that is in her work lies exactly in this point of view—the woman's point of view."[18] Karl Zigrosser, in his 1946 introduction to a catalogue of Kollwitz's prints, proposes that the artist's "urge to voice the basic attitude of woman was to find even more complete expression . . . as time went on." Zigrosser continues: "This maternal viewpoint is one of her great contributions," which he finds "valid, not as an imitation of what man has already done very well, but as an authentic voice of womankind."[19] Such responses from critics and scholars encourage readings of Kollwitz's art that value the feminine aspects of her art above other interpretive possibilities. While feminism invaluably served to re-establish Kollwitz as a formidable artist, its scholars progressed little beyond conflating Kollwitz's identity as a woman with her purposes as an artist.

This merging of woman and artist in many critics' minds has also resulted in numerous analyses that impose readings of "excessive emotionality"[20] on Kollwitz's art. As Sharp, in a 2011 essay investigating Kollwitz's *War* cycle, remarks, "the previous reception of [Kollwitz's] works made gendered assumptions about the experience of war as well as the creative process. This reception tends to stress the emotionality of Kollwitz's work."[21] Sharp elaborates,

> The poignancy of Kollwitz's position coupled with the powerful emotional appeal of her images has led many critics to stress the raw emotionality of the artist, to see her work as the inchoate cri de coeur of

[18] Mary White, "Interpreter of Life," *The Evening Post*, April 19, 1913.
[19] Zigrosser, *Käthe Kollwitz*, 9.
[20] Sharp, "Käthe Kollwitz's Witness to War," 88.
[21] Ibid., 87.

> the grieving mother. . . . The assumption that the artist's ability to express and arouse emotion must mirror her emotional state while creating the cycle has led to interpretations of Kollwitz's work as sentimental.[22]

Critics' assumptions that Kollwitz's art serves only to funnel her gendered perspective and traditionally feminine life experiences contradict the artist's own statements as well as the details of her creative process. In her journal, for example, Kollwitz describes the distance from emotionality she often required to produce art, writing on August 22, 1916, "I feel [the sorrow of Peter's death] stripping me physically of all the strength I need for work. . . . For work, one must be hard and thrust outside oneself what one has lived through."[23] Kollwitz recognized the necessity of separating herself from the intensity of her feelings in order to create communicative, emotionally accessible prints.

In 1937 Elizabeth McCausland predicted the development of this trend to approach Kollwitz's art from an over-emotionalized position, arguing that "Kollwitz's technical interests should be emphasized because it has been the custom to write as if she were an artist who let emotion take the place of discipline."[24] At the end of the article McCausland acknowledges,

> There are critics who say that Kollwitz is a great human being but not a great artist. These people should study the prints; careful scrutiny shows that they have been designed to create lines and tones equivalent to the emotion or idea stated. Because of this identity between form and content,

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[22] Ibid., 99.
[23] Kollwitz, *Diary and Letters*, 72.
[24] Elizabeth McCausland, "Käthe Kollwitz," *Parnassus* 19, no. 2 (1937): 23.

> it is easy to overlook the fact that the form was created by the conscious volition of the artist.[25]

In addition to examining the prints, those over-emphasizing Kollwitz's emotionality would have done well to consider the artist's preparatory works. Kollwitz's deliberateness of creation clearly emerges through investigation of her working process. The artist spent hours on preliminary drafts, experimenting with technique and media in order to print images whose content and form cohered as effectively as possible. Prelinger writes how "the number of preparatory works, rejected trials, and evidence of extensive technical experimentation, in addition to ceaseless reflection on media and techniques in diaries and letters, portray an artist intensely involved in process and the act of making."[26] Kollwitz's dedication to preparatory drafts, experimentation in technique and composition, and self-declared productive distance from intense feeling call into question interpretations of her work based on assumptions of extreme emotionality.

These assumptions have found their way into feminist analyses of Kollwitz's art—feminism in this case understood in a simplified form, rooted in explorations of motherhood, expressions of stereotypically feminine feeling, and the validation of female artistic perspectives. Feminism's rediscovery and promotion of Kollwitz resurrected the artist's reputation in many ways and places, particularly in America, and feminist approaches to her work continue to inspire a variety of insightful commentaries elaborating on Kollwitz's motives as an artist. Within the body of literature on Kollwitz, however, the dominance of feminist interpretations that focus on, if not celebrate, Kollwitz's emotionality overwhelms other, less gendered approaches to her art.

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[25] Ibid., 25.
[26] Prelinger, "Kollwitz Reconsidered," 13.

Disassociating Kollwitz from such concentrated attempts to render her art predominantly and reductively feminist introduces new interpretive possibilities that examine the technical, artistic, social, and political aspects of her work to form a more complex comprehension of Kollwitz as an artist.

When historians and art critics so closely tie their understandings of Kollwitz's broader artistic intentions to her identity as a woman, they inadvertently produce partial scholarship. This conflation of art and identity—or, rather, this overwhelming reliance on Kollwitz's life experiences to infuse meaning into her art—results in an aggregation of writing that is shockingly devoid of close visual analysis of the works themselves. These texts—for example, Kearns's *Käthe Kollwitz: Woman and Artist*, Klein and Klein's *Käthe Kollwitz: Life in Art*, or Zigrosser's *Käthe Kollwitz*, among many others—instead comprise detailed biographies that reference Kollwitz's most significant works, contextualizing her artistic achievements by situating them within a narrative of the events that presumably provoked their creation.

In recent years only a handful of scholars have remarked on the sparsity of detailed critical analysis of Kollwitz's oeuvre. Schaefer suggests this is a consequence of a simplistic feminism's determined appropriation of the artist:

> However, even as her stature was once again elevated, her work received little in-depth criticism. Feminists adopted Kollwitz as a model of the engaged woman artist. Her life became a paradigm for leftist liberal women, and her success, encouragement to a generation of young women

> artists. But, in the process, scholarship focused on biography rather than on analysis of the works.[27]

Schaefer's observations, although recorded twenty years ago, remain entirely relevant in contemporary considerations of the analytical work that still mostly fails to discuss Kollwitz's images in any visual detail.

Prelinger's "Kollwitz Reconsidered" (1992) registers similar complaints, identifying technical aspects of Kollwitz's work that criticism has essentially ignored. Prelinger does not directly attribute these oversights to an interfering predominance of feminist interpretations, but her critique provides further evidence of a general absence of analyses based on close examination of the particulars of Kollwitz's prints. Prelinger writes,

> Critics have . . . rarely studied the ways in which the artist manipulated technique and formal problems. The literature tells too little of the artist as a gifted and technically inventive printmaker, draftsman, and sculptor, a virtuosic visual rhetorician who, in her best work, achieved a brilliant balance between subject and form.[28]

With their commentaries Prelinger and Schaefer raise crucial concerns regarding the content of most essays or books published about or including Kollwitz. The widespread biographical emphasis that results from an over-valuing of Kollwitz's identity and life experience as a woman artist has produced a series of texts that proceed almost formulaically. Essays commence by heralding Kollwitz's achievements or popularity:

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[27] Schaefer, "Kollwitz in America," 33.
[28] Prelinger, "Kollwitz Reconsidered," 13.

"Few artists have as devoted a following as Käthe Kollwitz";[29] "Few artists are as universally loved as Käthe Kollwitz";[30] "Käthe Kollwitz . . . [is] considered to be one of the greatest graphic artists of the first half of the 20th century";[31] "The work of Käthe Kollwitz is the greatest poem of this age in Germany. . . . [she is] probably the greatest woman artist of modern times";[32] "Käthe Kollwitz . . . is one of Germany's most popular and successful graphic artists and sculptors";[33] and the list goes on. Most texts then proceed chronologically through Kollwitz's life, describing (in various detail, depending on the length of the source) her youth; training; relationship and marriage with Karl; various awards and teaching positions; periods of grief over losing her son, husband, and grandson; conflicts with the Nazi Party; and death. Authors sprinkle allusions to Kollwitz's well-known works throughout the biographical narrative, dedicating at best a few paragraphs to her larger cycles in order to supply superficial descriptions of each sheet. Scholars spotlight her themes of motherhood, loss, poverty, pacifism, and socialism, simultaneously offering general commentary about the raw emotionality of Kollwitz's "humanitarian" and "universal" artworks.

These discussions of Kollwitz's life, themes, and works are in many ways compelling and informative. They speak knowledgably—if sometimes broadly—about the artist's political statements and capture the strength of many elements of Kollwitz's art. These texts provide hefty surveys of the artist's life, subjects, and social motives. They provide details about the artist that *should* contribute to interpretations of her prints and sculptures. The problem resides in the fact that the narratives stop here: scholars are

[29] Ibid., 7.
[30] Ibid., 13.
[31] "The Cover," 536.
[32] McCausland, "Käthe Kollwitz," 20.
[33] Sharp, "Käthe Kollwitz's Witness to War," 87.

repeatedly content to offer biographies that reference works in passing but forego in-depth visual analyses. Despite reiterating claims about the meticulous attention that Kollwitz dedicated to the creation of her prints, no written source I have found has reciprocated that intensity of examination and contemplation of the images themselves. No scholar has satisfactorily answered McCausland's decades-old call to "study the prints" beyond respectfully including descriptions of the works that function to promote the respective author's feminist, technically analytical, or alternate agenda. Schaefer's more recent work renews McCausland's appeal, reframing the concern as one that continues to plague contemporary scholarship on Kollwitz:

> Because it is inevitable that we will always evaluate art through varying prisms, it is essential to analyze not only the prisms but also the formal and material character of the work. Only in such a conversation with the objects—their sources, techniques, and the states through which they develop—can we begin to complicate our simplistic and political readings. Perhaps the time has come for such an analysis of Käthe Kollwitz.[34]

In this conclusion to her article, Schaefer summarizes some of the crucial problems I have enumerated regarding the general oversimplification of many accounts of Kollwitz's art.

This persistent lack of attention to the details of the works themselves reinforces an insinuation that a knowledge of Kollwitz's biography is sufficient to explicate her art. Scholars' almost identical claims that Kollwitz's legacy consists of universal, humanitarian artworks actually weaken the impact of her work when inadequately supported by visual evidence: how does the composition of one specific work

[34] Schaefer, "Kollwitz in America," 33.

communicate themes of universality? How does the hunched back of one particular figure trigger statements about society's system of exploitation of the working classes? How do the titles of individual sheets or cycles interact with the images depicted? Scholars have consistently avoided dealing with this genre of questions in favor of discussing broad-scale themes of motherhood, representations of war, et cetera. In this project I hope to contribute a more in-depth consideration of Kollwitz's art through examining one cycle, *A Weavers' Rebellion* (*Ein Weberaufstand*), in extensive detail. I will propose new interpretive possibilities for Kollwitz's works, grounding my analyses not in the artist's gender or in expansive biographical facts but in the visual evidence of the works themselves, critical theories about art and theatre in nineteenth-century Europe, and in the cycle's source of artistic inspiration.

A Weavers' Rebellion (1893-97)

In February 1893 Kollwitz attended a private opening performance of Gerhart Hauptmann's new drama, *The Weavers* (*Die Weber*).[35] The play, which was under a governmental ban and performed by the Independent Stage Company of Berlin (the Freie Bühne),[36] dramatizes the Silesian weavers' revolt of 1844. The work features dozens of weavers and their families; this protagonist mob drives the action, which culminates in a rebellion against the wealthy factory owner, Dreissiger, whose exploitive practices have entrapped his workers in poverty and miserable living conditions. *The Weavers* is composed of five acts, opening in the basement storeroom of Dreissiger's house, where the weavers bring their goods for inspection to receive payment. The second act takes

[35] Prelinger, "Kollwitz Reconsidered," 20.
[36] Martha Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz: Woman and Artist* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1976), 70.

place in a weaver's home and introduces a new character, Moritz Jäger, whose outside perspective as a soldier agitates the weaver community into recognizing the unacceptability of their circumstances. Plans for rebellion continue to solidify throughout the third act, which takes place in a local bar with townsfolk, while act four migrates back to Dreissiger's home, this time in the living quarters upstairs. The luxuriously decorated interior of Dreissiger's mansion renders the poverty of the weavers even more shocking by way of contrast. The factory owner and his guests hear the approaching mob and flee, leaving their house empty for the angry weavers to ransack. After this destruction, the weavers continue their march, and the play closes with a scene found odd by both critics and audience members alike: an old weaver, Hilse, converses in his home in a neighboring town with his family about the rebellious weavers. He disapproves of their violence and refuses to participate, in part due to his religious convictions, insisting instead on sitting by the window to continue his weaving work: "This is where we'll stay and do our duty, even if the snow catches fire."[37] As soon as Hilse finishes uttering his resolution, a stray bullet flies in through the window and fatally strikes the old man, who collapses over his loom. His wife and granddaughter cautiously approach his body, confused at the chain of events, and the play ends.

In her diary Kollwitz remarks on her attendance at the opening performance, writing, "The impression the play made was tremendous. . . . That performance was a milestone in my work."[38] The artist immediately suspended other projects and began a six-sheet cycle entitled *A Weavers' Rebellion* that she completed in 1897. The cycle comprises three lithographs, *Need* (*Not*, fig. 1)*, Death* (*Tod*, fig. 2), and *Council*

[37] Gerhart Hauptmann, *The Weavers*, in *The Methuen Drama Book of Naturalist Plays*, ed. Chris Megson (London: A & C Black Publishers Limited, 2010), 220.
[38] Hans Kollwitz, *Diary and Letters*, 42.

(*Beratung*, fig. 3), and three etchings, *March of the Weavers* (*Weberzug*, fig. 4)*, Storming the Gate* (*Sturm*, fig. 5)*,* and *End* (*Ende*, fig. 6). Though Hauptmann's play was pivotal for Kollwitz, she does not explicitly—or faithfully—illustrate his script, creating instead a "parallel and self-sufficient visual text"[39] that represents themes expressed in the drama in a new medium. The first sheet, *Need*—perhaps more influenced by Edvard Munch's *The Sick Child* (1894) than by Hauptmann's *The Weavers*[40]—depicts a mother despairing over her dying, bed-ridden child while a loom fills the remaining interior of her tiny home. *Death* illustrates a child and father watching helplessly as their mother slumps against a wall, responding to the beckoning hand of Death that brushes her left shoulder. *Council* comprises four men plotting rebellion in the corner of a bar, and *March of the Weavers* shows the group traveling to the factory owners' house. They arrive at the mansion in *Storming the Gate*, digging up cobblestones to throw at the stone wall and wrought-iron gate. The final sheet, *End*, reenters the homes of the weavers, where two women mourn the loss of protesters whose bodies begin to accumulate on the floor beneath the loom. Kollwitz originally intended to incorporate a final seventh sheet entitled *From Many Wounds You Bleed, O People*, but the image's Symbolist style formed "a jarring contrast to the naturalism of the other *Weavers* images,"[41] and Kollwitz ultimately decided against its inclusion in the series.

After the cycle's completion in 1897, the jury of the Great Berlin Art Exhibition voted to award *A Weavers' Rebellion* the gold medal. Kaiser Wilhelm II intervened, however, denying the honor's conferral in an attempt to silence the cycle's political messages. The Kaiser's response hardly detracted from the much larger positive public

[39] Prelinger, "Kollwitz Reconsidered," 30.
[40] Ibid., 23
[41] Ibid., 26.

reaction to the work; Klein and Klein observe that "the *Weavers* series caused a sensation, for it was one of the first times that powerful pictures had shown workers and their conflicts sympathetically."[42] Kollwitz remarks herself that "from [the Great Berlin Art Exhibition] on, I was counted among the foremost artists of the country. . . . The *Weavers* is probably the best-known work I have done."[43]

Despite its importance in launching Kollwitz's artistic reputation, the cycle has received little analytic attention. Klein and Klein assign several paragraphs to a discussion of the work, addressing the plot of Hauptmann's *The Weavers*, surface descriptions of the six sheets, the technique Kollwitz employed, and the biographical context surrounding her production of the cycle, including the birth of Peter and the death of her father before she could present him with the completed cycle.[44] The authors offer few specific details of the images themselves and examine none of them in any depth. Kearns's biography of Kollwitz similarly lacks extensive analytical consideration of *A Weavers' Rebellion*. She devotes several pages to discussion of the cycle, although a significant proportion of her analysis details the technical processes that Kollwitz used, such as aquatint and drypoint. Kearns's section on the *Weavers* cycle also includes moments of questionable visual interpretation. In the second sheet, for example, Kearns describes how "Death's fleshy arm is wrapped around the neck of the dumb, staring child; the other arm, a skeleton, barely tugs on the woman's forearm."[45] A close look at the image reveals that this "fleshy arm" belongs to the child himself, who props his chin on his wrist and gazes at his mother. Death's left hand, as Kearns notes, brushes the

[42] Mina C. Klein and H. Arthur Klein, *Käthe Kollwitz: Life in Art* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 33.
[43] Kollwitz, *Diary and Letters*, 43.
[44] Klein and Klein, *Käthe Kollwitz*, 32-37.
[45] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz*, 73.

sleeve of the woman, while its right hand actually grips an overturned bowl, identifying starvation as a cause of death. These incomplete or misleading interpretations would not be so problematic if they made up only a small percentage of the analytical work available on Kollwitz's *A Weavers' Rebellion.* The fact that these accounts come from two of the most comprehensive studies of the artist underscores the alarming paucity of articles, essays, or monographs that delve meticulously into the works themselves to elucidate visual evidence to support larger claims about Kollwitz's intentions as an artist. Noun writes that the *Weavers* "series foreshadowed [Kollwitz's] lifelong concerns, which she would eventually come to represent directly and in contemporary terms."[46] A more nuanced and detailed understanding *A Weavers' Rebellion* could consequently inform analyses of Kollwitz's later works, as themes appear in this first cycle that remain consistently important to the artist throughout the rest of her oeuvre.

The significance of *A Weavers' Rebellion* in the overall body of Kollwitz's work leads me to the central questions driving this project: can viewers learn something new about Kollwitz's political and social aims through a close examination of the *Weavers* cycle and a comparison to the work that inspired it, Hauptmann's play? Will such a study and comparison alter interpretations of Kollwitz's artistic intentions? I hope to demonstrate over the course of this thesis that Kollwitz created artworks whose visual details merit in-depth explication and provoke a variety of interpretive possibilities. I aim to provide readings of her art that diverge from the gendered analyses that influence or direct most of the scholarship on Kollwitz. In agreement with the numerous scholars who cite Kollwitz as one of Germany's greatest artists, I hope this project's close engagement

[46] Noun, *Three Berlin Artists*, 55.

with her artworks helps substantiate that claim through expanding its scope beyond gender and biography.

As I will discuss in the following chapters, scholarly analyses of Hauptmann's play help to inform interpretations of Kollwitz's cycle. Drawing on critical essays about European theatre theory during the nineteenth century—applied specifically to Hauptmann's *The Weavers* by the playwright Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) and the literary scholar Peter Szondi (1929-1971)—I will consider the dramatic-epic tensions internal to each work and the ways in which *The Weavers* and *A Weavers' Rebellion* engage contemporary social contexts. Chapter One establishes these categories of drama and epic theatre, providing general characteristics of both genres, and also discusses the emergence of Naturalism, a style Brecht describes as initiating the transition of theatre from decontextualized drama to more socially relevant epic. While this project will not consider these works by Hauptmann and Kollwitz in explicitly Marxist terms, it is helpful to keep in mind that Brecht's strong political foundations in Marxism guide his assertions about epic theatre's critical relationship to society. The second half of the chapter considers ways in which Hauptmann's *The Weavers* exemplifies Naturalist theatre, exhibiting both tragic and epic aspects. Chapter Two applies an analogous analysis to Kollwitz's *A Weavers' Rebellion*. Popular and critical reception of the cycle as well as formal characteristics of the images invoke an ostensibly tragic reading of the work, but further examination reveals the contending force of the epic that ultimately expands the work's significance, linking art with social and political realities.

Hauptmann's *The Weavers* and Kollwitz's *A Weavers' Rebellion* both broach the epic through Naturalism. These works retain dramatic tendencies, but ultimately the epic

aspects of play and cycle fulfill Brecht's expectations—detailed in the first chapter—for art to express sociopolitical forces. Hauptmann's and Kollwitz's *Weavers* communicate the incompatibility of dramatic forms with new, epic content; the incapability of either play or cycle to proceed dramatically past a certain point indicates the necessity of yielding to Brecht's demand to reimagine traditional relationships between artistic structures and contents.

Chapter One:
Drama and Epic in Gerhart Hauptmann's *The Weavers* (1893)

Introduction

In order to analyze the sociopolitical possibilities of Hauptmann's *The Weavers* and, by extension, Kollwitz's *A Weavers' Rebellion*, one must develop an understanding of the theatrical and critical traditions out of which play and cycle emerged. This chapter first investigates the characteristics and contextual relevancy of the traditional dramatic form, based in classical expectations of Aristotelian tragedy, and then of the epic form, lauded by Brecht as the modern theatrical genre that engages contemporary political problems and challenges spectators to think critically about the structures that govern society. I will then discuss the ways in which some theatrical works begin to diverge from drama but fail to adhere completely to epic; Brecht identifies this transition space between genres as Naturalism, a style that retains aspects of tragedy but begins to advance into greater social consciousness. The remainder of the chapter involves a discussion of Hauptmann's *The Weavers*, a work Brecht sites as an exemplary Naturalist play, and both he and Szondi discuss the work's dual tragic and epic characteristics. An initial consideration of the play suggests a dominant dramatic reading that further examination problematizes: *The Weavers*' epic aspects and the tension created by internal dramatic-epic contradictions alert spectators to the incapability of dramatic form to encapsulate socially significant content.

Nineteenth-Century European Dramatic and Epic Theatre

Popular and critical standards for pre-nineteenth century European theatre relied predominantly on conceptions of classical Aristotelian tragedy. This style of theatre in its European realization (a modified version of Aristotelian drama, having developed especially throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance)[47] functions within rigid guidelines for what constitutes drama. Expected dramatic characteristics include the presence of a hero; the development of a cathartic plot, in which the audience bears witness to the hero's trajectory: initial hope, episodes of struggle, failure, and downfall; an appeal to the audience's empathy (often accomplished through the hero's change in fate); and an absoluteness of time and place that ensures the play's unity.

Such dramatic strategies, which Szondi analyzes in depth in his essay "Theory of the Modern Drama," guided the creation and reception of most successful western European theatrical pieces until the nineteenth century. Szondi proposes that "the Drama of modernity," with its new emphasis "on the basis of interpersonal relationships alone, … came into being in the Renaissance."[48] This privileging of intimate relationships and interaction rendered dialogue essential: "The dialogue carries the Drama," writes Szondi, and "the Drama is possible only when dialogue is possible."[49] The drama spotlights individuals and their fates, developing plot through interpersonal action and conflict, dialogue, and personal tragedies.

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[47] Author interview with Niall W. Slater, Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Latin and Greek at Emory University, February 2, 2015.
[48] Peter Szondi, "Theory of the Modern Drama, Parts I-II," trans. Michael Hays, *boundary 2* 11, no. 3 (1983): 194. Szondi capitalizes the "D" of "drama" when discussing the broader genre. See "Szondi's Theory of Modern Drama" by Steve Giles for further discussion.
[49] Ibid., 197.

Strict containment of the plot within the sphere of the personal, achieved in large part through the dominance of action and dialogue, results in a theatrical form that operates independently of any exterior world. Szondi discusses at length the ways in which "the Drama is absolute. In order to be purely relational, that is, to be dramatic, it must break loose from everything external. It can be conscious of nothing outside itself."[50] This absoluteness manifests itself in two principle ways: in unity of time and in unity of place. "In the Drama," Szondi asserts, "time unfolds as an absolute, linear sequence in the present."[51] Scenes temporally unfold one immediately after another, and events that occur in one scene directly trigger events enacted in the next. Similar boundaries restrict dramatic location: "As with time, the spectator should not be conscious of a larger spatial context."[52] The action of the play remains within precisely delineated space that acknowledges no larger social structure or environment. In other words, the drama creates a world of its own on multiple levels, enveloping spectators in a plot and cast of characters that develop uninterruptedly through linear time and fixed place.

This dramatic absoluteness absorbs audience members into the space of the play, engaging their sympathies. As Brecht describes in *Brecht on Theatre*, "Our dramatic form is based on the spectator's ability to be carried along, identify himself, feel empathy and understand."[53] The drama invites the audience to identify with the individuals on stage—and with the hero in particular—to empathically experience his (or occasionally her) rise and fall in the traditional Aristotelian sense, "through pity and fear effecting the proper

[50] Ibid., 195.
[51] Ibid., 196.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, ed. and trans. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 25.

purgation of these emotions."[54] The audience participates in the hero's progression through the plot, initially anticipating hopeful success before suffering alongside the hero as he endures "a change . . . from good fortune to bad"[55] that defines the Aristotelian tragic arc. Through empathetically sharing the hero's fate, the audience experiences catharsis: the dramatic cycle completes itself, and audience members feel satisfactorily purged of their fear and pity. Spectators expect this Aristotelian trajectory in drama because of its longstanding formal dominance in theatrical productions. They know before the play begins that the hero will rise but ultimately fall—the governing force of his environment imposes itself, rendering him passive in the realization of his own fate. Factors external to the protagonist but internal to the unity of the dramatic whole direct the narrative, molding the plot, action, and dialogue to cohere to Aristotelian tragic form.

Objections to these moments of dramatic unity, emotional release, and tragic determinism resonate in Brecht's and Szondi's critiques of the drama, which problematize the traditional theatrical form through considering its larger social effects—or lack thereof. Brecht elaborates on what he understands as the purpose of dramatic tragedy:

> Thus what the ancients, following Aristotle, demanded of tragedy is nothing higher or lower than that it should entertain people. . . . And the catharsis of which Aristotle writes—cleansing by fear and pity, or from fear and pity—is a purification which is performed not only in a pleasurable way, but precisely for the purpose of pleasure.[56]

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[54] Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. S. H. Butcher, accessed 11 December, 2014, http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.1.1.html.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 181.

In Brecht's interpretation of Aristotelian drama, tragedy's preoccupation with cathartic pleasure distances the genre from a larger contextualized social or political situation. Szondi, acknowledging the rigidity of dramatic form, writes, "An action which represents is not dramatic: the events in the Drama, absolute in themselves, can stand for nothing beyond themselves."[57] The drama can provoke no social considerations or broader critical thought in its audience. Spectators empathize with individuals and their personal tragedies without any conscious recognition of the sociopolitical structures in place creating the environments that determine the fate of these characters. The absoluteness requisite for unity isolates the drama, inhibiting possibilities for social function.

Brecht's criticism of Aristotelian drama originates in this social disconnectedness and reductiveness produced by enclosed dramatic unity:

> It is absolutely false, that is to say, it leads nowhere, it is not worth the writer's while, to simplify his problems so much that the immense, complicated, actual life-process of human beings in the age of the final struggle between the bourgeois and the proletarian class, is reduced to a 'plot', setting, or background for the creation of great individuals.[58]

He specifies the problem as inherent to tragic form, identifying the ways in which drama fails to engage larger contexts.

> The issue here is as follows: the old technique [the drama] has reached a point of crisis precisely because it did not allow a satisfactory depiction of individuals in the class struggle, and because these mental and emotional

[57] Szondi, "Theory of the Modern Drama," 223.
[58] Theodor Adorno et al., *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 2007), 77.

> experiences do not insert the [spectator] into the class struggle but lead him out of it.[59]

Drama's prioritization of interpersonal relationships results in a failure to address larger social realities, distracting audiences from developing critical awareness. Brecht's political sensibilities, highly attuned to the conditions of the working classes and their fight against oppressive sociopolitical structures, ground his reaction against the contextually ineffectual dramatic form. Brecht advocates the redemption of the theatre through the development of a new, socially engaged form: the epic.

Brecht argues that changes in contemporary society (i.e., nineteenth-century Europe), particularly those involving the emerging visibility and force of the working classes, comprise a content that demands an appropriate representational form:

> Methods become exhausted; stimuli no longer work. New problems appear and demand new methods. Reality changes; in order to represent it, modes of representation must also change. Nothing comes from nothing; the new comes from the old, but that is why it is new.[60]

The dramatic form, Brecht believes, retains little contemporary purpose. It ignores group dynamics manifest in the class struggles of the period in favor of promoting individual tragedies with pre-determined fates. The epic form, on the other hand, which Brecht heralds as "the modern theatre,"[61] provides a new, content-appropriate mode of representation that encourages audience consideration of the contemporary world.

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[59] Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Art and Politics*, ed. Tom Kuhn and Steve Giles (London: Methuen Publishing Limited, 2003), 230.
[60] Adorno et al., *Aesthetics and Politics*, 82.
[61] Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 33.

For Brecht, epic theatre connects play and society most fundamentally through audience engagement. Brecht repeatedly advocates the necessity of this theatrical form that challenges audience members, treating them as "a collection of individuals, capable of thinking and of reasoning, of making judgments."[62] Through the epic Brecht assigns theatre a "new purpose . . . called paedagogics,"[63] intended to intellectually stimulate spectators and provoke critical thought in lieu of passive reception. Brecht explains, "The stage begins to be didactic," transforming the theatre into "a place for philosophers" who "not only wish to explain the world but wish to change it."[64]

In order to change the world, an audience must first recognize the source of its determining structures. Brecht frequently reasserts the importance of the epic to "expose the laws of cause and effect" directing society.

> The 'historical conditions' [depicted in the play] must of course not be imagined (nor will they be so constructed) as mysterious Powers (in the background); on the contrary, they are created and maintained by men (and will in due course be altered by them): it is the actions taking place before us that allow us to see what they are.[65]

Brecht stresses that theatre should ignite critical consideration of society in spectators' minds through a revelation of the structures that create and maintain class hierarchies, political systems, oppressive environments, etc., and he contrasts the purposes of the epic with those of the dramatic:

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[62] Ibid., 79.
[63] Ibid., 30.
[64] Ibid., 80.
[65] Ibid., 190.

> It [the epic] does not make the hero the victim of an inevitable fate, nor does it wish to make the spectator the victim, so to speak, of a hypnotic experience in the theatre. In fact, it has as a purpose the 'teaching' of the spectator a certain quite practical attitude; we have to make it possible for him to take a critical attitude while he is in the theatre (as opposed to a subjective attitude of becoming completely 'entangled' in what is going on).[66]

The epic disregards Aristotelian expectations for individualized heroic trajectories and rejects classical determinism, assuming instead an educational role that invites spectators to engage intellectually with the play. Through watching epic theatre, an audience actively develops recognition of the ways in which the lives and environments of the characters operate not within an obscured, all-encompassing pre-determination, but within a human-made system most often depicted as oppressive and exploitative of the working classes. "*Epic theatre*," Brecht believes, "is the theatrical style of our time"[67] that should connect the audience with the contemporary world instead of, as exemplified by the dramatic tradition, facilitate its detachment.

Such realignment of theatrical purpose and content demands significant changes in formal execution. The epic admits new kinds of protagonists that often forgo an individual hero (the mob, for example); abandons the realm of the absolute, both spatially and temporally; has the capacity to follow multiple storylines at once; and acknowledges the presence of a narrator or, in Szondi's terms, an "epic *I*"[68] that stands outside the

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[66] Ibid., 78.
[67] Ibid., 23. Original emphasis.
[68] Szondi, "Theory of the Modern Drama," 194.

action and directs the narrative progression. These characteristics contribute to the epic's greater social consciousness and spectatorial engagement.

While the dramatic revolves around evoking empathy through its hero's personal tragedies, "the essential point of the epic theatre is perhaps that it appeals less to the feelings than to the spectator's reason."[69] Brecht does not deny the epic emotion,[70] but the emphasis shifts: group sensibilities drive the plot, and collective action replaces interpersonal relationships. Dialogue loses its central importance, and the individual hero often becomes a group of figures. The epic discards the enveloping intimacy of the drama and no longer triggers an audience's catharsis or close identification with particular characters, provoking instead consideration of broader contemporary problems.

This movement away from empathy contributes to a larger rejection of dramatic absoluteness, both temporal and spatial. Szondi describes epic scenes as having their "own antecedents and results (past and future) external to the play";[71] epic works inherently operate within broader spatial contexts. Time functions similarly: no expectations of temporal continuity restrict the progression of the epic narrative and, as a consequence, this form of theatre functions equally well when navigating a plurality of storylines or groups of protagonists as when following one. Because of this structural flexibility, the scenes of an epic play exist somewhat independently of one another; they do not adhere to directly causal relationships. Brecht cites German writer and psychiatric doctor[72] Alfred Döblin (1878-1957) in his elaboration on this fragmentary character of the epic. Döblin explains that "with an epic work, as opposed to a dramatic, one can as it

[69] Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 22-23.
[70] Ibid., 227.
[71] Szondi, "Theory of the Modern Drama," 196.
[72] "Alfred Döblin," Britannica Online Encyclopedia, accessed March 23, 2015, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/167260/Alfred-Doblin.

were take a pair of scissors and cut it into individual pieces, which remain fully capable of life."[73] This epic disjointedness mimics the "fragmentary character of contemporary social experience,"[74] fulfilling Brecht's demands that epic form coincide with its evolving content.

Continual disjunctions in time and space within a theatrical work alert spectators to the presence of an epic *I* directing narrative progress and ensuring coherency. As Szondi states, "Spatial fragmentation (like temporal) assumes an epic *I*."[75] This "implicit presence of a *monteur*"[76] who orchestrates the action from outside of the play disrupts any semblance of dramatic absoluteness, demonstrating by example the objective distance with which the audience should engage the theatrical work. The play as a whole "come[s] into being because of an epic *I* which permeates the work,"[77] and this nondramatic, directive presence forges intentional connections between society, play, and audience.

From Drama to Epic: The Social Drama and Naturalism

While some plays adhere to and effectively operate within the epic form, others combine characteristics from epic and dramatic theatre. Both Brecht and Szondi discuss these ambiguous theatrical endeavors that fall between drama and epic, resulting most often from a dramatist's inability to completely abandon certain aspects of traditional theatrical practices. When these styles compete within a play, tensions emerge and threaten the coherence of the work. Hauptmann's *The Weavers*, which I will discuss later

[73] Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 70.
[74] Adorno et al., *Aesthetics and Politics*, 13.
[75] Szondi, "Theory of the Modern Drama," 196.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid., 197.

in this chapter, exemplifies such tensions: contradictions arise when the epic subject matter of the play does not cohere with its dramatic form.

Szondi employs the phrase "social drama"[78] to identify this genre of theater, elaborating, "The social dramatist attempts to dramatise the politico-economic structures which dictate the conditions of individual life. . . . This kind of dramatic presentation requires another sort of work first: the transformation of the alienated and reified world into interpersonal actuality."[79] The meshing of a content intended to trigger external consciousness (epic) with a form still reliant on interpersonal relationships (dramatic) results in a work that fulfills the expectations of neither drama nor epic: "The 'social drama' is, therefore, epic in nature and a contradiction in itself."[80] Interpersonal relationships still dominate the action, but the "dramatis personae represent thousands of people living in the same conditions."[81] Through references to conditions exterior to the play, the social drama extends beyond Aristotelian absoluteness, guided by an objective epic *I*. This mélange of dramatic and epic characteristics places the social drama indeterminately between genres.

Brecht investigates similar moments of formal ambiguity in his discussions of epic drama. He identifies the form's origins in Naturalism, a late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European movement in literature and visual art emphasizing "scientific observation of life without idealization and often including elements of determinism."[82] Brecht describes Naturalist playwrights' tentative attempts to transition from drama to

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[78] Ibid., 223.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid., 224.
[81] Ibid.
[82] "Naturalism," Merriam-Webster Online, accessed January 7, 2015, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/naturalism.

epic, citing examples of works that initially challenge yet ultimately accede to aspects of traditional theatre:

> The beginnings of Naturalism were the beginnings of epic drama in Europe. . . . Naturalist drama grew out of the bourgeois novel of Zola and Dostoevsky. . . . The Naturalists, Ibsen, Hauptmann, tried to put on stage the new material of the new novels, and could find no other form for this than that of these novels: an epic form. When they were at once accused of being undramatic, they abandoned the form at once, together with the material, and their advance faltered; it appeared to be an advance into new areas of material, but in reality it was the advance into epic form. [83]

Even though Brecht credits Naturalism with these first ventures into epic form, he admits that the style could not sustain a complete transition from dramatic to epic.

Szondi similarly acknowledges the inherent differences between Naturalism and the epic: "Naturalism, however revolutionary it acted or wanted to be in style or 'world view,' actually took a conservative position in questions of dramaturgy. Preservation of the traditional dramatic form was central to Naturalism."[84] Brecht elaborates on Naturalism's inclinations towards drama, as well, writing, "*Naturalism* and a certain type of *anarchistic montage* can be confronted with their social effects, by demonstrating that they merely reflect the symptoms of the surface of things and not the deeper causal complexes of society."[85] Epic productions require a revelation of political and social structures, and Naturalism's failure to do so originates in its emphasis on simply recording situations in detailed, scientific terms. Situations presented in Naturalist theatre

[83] Brecht, *Brecht on Art and Politics*, 72.
[84] Szondi, "Theory of the Modern Drama," 210.
[85] Adorno et al., *Aesthetics and Politics*, 72. Original emphasis.

come across as resolutely factual, as *the way things are*. This scientific observation of life occupies itself with surface-level elements of environments, allocating little attention to examinations of broader structural systems.

The inability of Naturalist theatre to expose cause-and-effect relationships in society also stems from its "assumption of scientific determinism,"[86] which closely resembles the fatalism of the drama:

> Individual characters [are] seen as helpless products of heredity and environment, motivated by strong instinctual drives from within and harassed by social and economic pressures from without. As such, they [have] little will or responsibility for their fates, and the prognosis for their 'cases' [is] pessimistic at the outset.[87]

These remnants of determinism contradict the simultaneous efforts of Naturalist theatre to present new content based on social realism and contemporary literature. In his discussion of the Naturalist playwrights' brief venture into the epic, Brecht describes how they balked at criticism of the new genre's deviation from traditional drama. Because of the playwrights' reliance on dramatic principles, a wide reception of their works as fragmentary and non-narrative would deteriorate their Naturalist aims. In more specific analyses, Brecht also considers the ways in which an ambivalence to entirely discard traditional dramatic forms when presenting epic subjects resonates in individual theatrical works, as exemplified in Hauptmann's *The Weavers*.

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[86] "Naturalism (art)," Britannica Online Encyclopedia, accessed January 7, 2015, http://www.britannica.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/EBchecked/topic/406427/naturalism.
[87] Ibid.

Brecht and Szondi on Hauptmann's *The Weavers*

By including Hauptmann as an example of a dramatist venturing into the epic through Naturalism, Brecht implies a consideration of *The Weavers*, which he describes as "a Naturalist work"[88] and "the first great work that presents the emancipation of the proletariat."[89] He discusses the play's "revolutionary effect" and applauds its promotion of "the idea that selling the commodity of labour power can be a major subject of art."[90] He hesitates to praise *The Weavers* as an entirely epic production, however: "And yet a monumental weakness can be sensed here, something quite unrealistic in the playwright's attitude. This is the appeal to the pity of the middle class, an entirely futile appeal."[91] While the play's contemporary social relevancy and provision of a venue in which "the proletarian steps on to the stage, and does so as the masses,"[92] registers as epic content, contending dramatic structures and Naturalistic tendencies continue to permeate the work. *The Weavers* cannot succeed as an epic so long as it primarily evokes pity in bourgeois audiences, since such cathartic experiences result not in the active development of a political consciousness but in the naturalization—or representation as pre-determined and unalterable—of the conditions of the working class.

Both Brecht and Szondi identify the ways in which *The Weavers* occupies this liminal space between dramatic and epic, posing problems based on its contradictory form and content. The dramatic-epic struggle within the play begs the question: does *The Weavers* remain predominately tragic through its naturalization of working-class oppression, or does the epic subject resonate more forcefully with the audience and

[88] Brecht, *Brecht on Art and Politics*, 256.
[89] Ibid., 254.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.

ultimately guide them towards critical thinking? The dramatic readings that Brecht and Szondi propose endanger the political efficacy of *The Weavers*; if the play remains equally driven by the tragic as by the epic, it will not reveal the oppressive political structures that direct society, nor will it challenge audience members to question their own social responsibilities to effect meaningful change. While the tragic ostensibly dominates in *The Weavers*, a closer examination of the moments and ways in which the epic reveals itself discredits a purely dramatic reading. The overriding tension between dramatic form and epic subject disrupts the fluidity of the play, calling attention to drama's incapability of presenting such an enormous social subject within its overly determined formal restrictions. *The Weavers* may not entirely succeed as an epic work, but it advances in the right direction, problematizing the naturalizing tendencies of the drama in its inability to adhere completely to them. The play unsuccessfully attempts to fulfill dramatic expectations while working with epic content, a failure that demonstrates the necessity—as stated repeatedly by Brecht—of finding a new form to accommodate new content. Hauptmann's *The Weavers* exemplifies the incapability of the old dramatic form to frame contemporary epic subject matter, revealing on a broader scale the problems of sociopolitical structures that naturalize the exploitation of the working classes.

Many qualities of the dramatic theatre as defined by Brecht and Szondi appear in *The Weavers*. An initial analysis of the play suggests that it naturalizes the oppression of the weavers and—with broader application—of the working class in general through its classically tragic form; Naturalistic sense of determinism; and appeal to the pity of bourgeois audiences, who cathartically resolve their feelings during the play through

witnessing the expected suppression of the weavers' revolt. Brecht argues that Naturalist playwrights such as Hauptmann "excavated pity from the Aristotelian formula for tragedy," employing a theatrical form that reinforces "conformity with natural laws."[93] *The Weavers* assumes a central role in Brecht's assertion: "Class struggle was depicted, and that was realist, but class struggle was invested with the peculiar character of being natural in the bourgeois sense. . . . It was natural that the proletarians were fighting, but it was also natural that they would be defeated."[94] Brecht argues that Hauptmann's evocation of tragic drama in *The Weavers* undermines potentially progressive social scrutiny: instead of encouraging audiences to "take sides in response to the issues presented in a play . . . on the basis of rational consideration,"[95] which could lead to political reflection or reform, Hauptmann molds his drama into a familiar form that appeals to viewers' sympathy, purges them of reactive feeling through a presentation of the completion of the tragic narrative cycle (the suppression of the weavers' revolt), and reinforces the fated nature of the weavers' suffering. The pity of a bourgeois audience achieved through dramatic means fixates on individual characters in the tragedy and remains intensely de-contextualized. Audiences experiencing Aristotelian catharsis implicitly consent to a continuation of the weavers' oppression: the predictability of the rebellion's suppression reinforces its naturalness. When action meets spectators' expectations, they do not often question its rightfulness.

In addition to the imminent suppression of the weavers' revolt that provokes pity and catharsis, rendering Hauptmann's work classically tragic, other examples of naturalizing tendencies appear throughout the play. In his critique of *The Weavers*, Brecht

[93] Ibid., 109.
[94] Ibid., 256.
[95] Ibid., 60.

problematizes Naturalist conceptions of the workers' environment, whose "influence . . . on human beings was conceded" but in such a way that it "appeared as fate, it wasn't depicted as a human construct that could be changed by humans."[96] Examples of environmental influences on the weavers appear especially in Hauptmann's stage directions, in which he describes the figures' physical characteristics:

> The men . . . are predominantly sunken-chested, coughing, poverty-stricken people with dirty, pale complexions: creatures of the loom, whose knees have become bent as a result of excessive sitting. Their women look less typical at first glance; they're broken, harassed, exhausted—whereas the men still show a certain pitiful gravity—and ragged, whereas the men's clothes are patched. The young girls are nonetheless not unattractive; waxen pallor, tender shapes and large, protruding melancholy eyes are typical of them.[97]

Hauptmann's weavers embody their environment, and the playwright's descriptive phrases—"sunken-chested," "poverty-stricken," "creatures of the loom," "broken"—do little to suggest that culpability lies anywhere outside of that working environment. Hauptmann employs the word "pitiful" (*kläglich*),[98] which reinforces the playwright's tragic aims. In light of Brecht's claims, Hauptmann's stage directions indicate an assumption of inevitability concerning the working environment and resulting deformation of the weavers' bodies.

Brecht and Szondi's tragic analyses of Hauptmann's *The Weavers* render the play at best politically ambiguous. Hauptmann's realist and socialist motives come into

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[96] Ibid., 256.
[97] Hauptmann, *The Weavers*, 171.
[98] Gerhart Hauptmann, *Die Weber* (Berlin: Verlag Ullstein GmbH, 1959), 9.

question once framed within the context of naturalizing the weavers' exploitation, and Hauptmann's reliance on Aristotelian form to appeal to the pity of the audience does not reveal the oppressive sociopolitical structures behind the weavers' environment; the play seems to place no responsibility on humans for constructing these wretched conditions of the working classes.

A more nuanced consideration of the play, however, reveals another layer of interpretive complexity. While Hauptmann's *The Weavers* appears only to reinforce a naturalization of working-class living conditions, a closer examination of several events and the form-content relationship within the work challenges such a bleak analysis. Szondi offers an interpretation that investigates in detail this complex relationship at work in *The Weavers*, and Brecht discounts a classification of the play as drama after specifying the groups of people to whom tragedy applies. Both theorists provide grounds for considering *The Weavers* in more epic and expansive ways.

Szondi begins by acknowledging the classical dramatic form of Hauptmann's play but makes a distinction between the form and its epic subject. Szondi refuses to classify *The Weavers* as a drama, claiming that "neither the life of the weavers, who have only known work and hunger, nor the political-economic situation can be transformed into dramatic actuality. The only action possible, given the conditions of their existence, is one *against* these conditions: an uprising."[99] The uprising, which develops through neither dialogue nor interpersonal conflict, establishes itself as the epic subject of the play.

Szondi enumerates additional examples from the construction and content of the play to support his claims about its epic nature: "review, presentation for an outsider, reports, description carefully anchored in the choice of scenes; the manner in which each

[99] Peter Szondi, "Theory of the Modern Drama," 226.

act begins anew; the introduction of new characters in every act; the way in which the uprising is followed as it spreads . . . —all this points to the epic basis of the play."[100] These theatrical structures and plot developments clash with the characteristics associated with the drama, a genre whose traditionally "limited number of characters . . . serves to guarantee the absoluteness and autonomy of the dramatic whole."[101] *The Weavers*, while in certain ways striving to conform to the bourgeois tragic dramatic form, actually promotes an epic storyline through its subject of uprising and strategies of presentation. The resulting tension between form and content disrupts the seamlessness of the play and self-reflexively undermines its own naturalizing tendencies.

The outsider that Szondi references, Moritz Jäger, appears in Act II of *The Weavers*. Jäger, a weaver's child who had left home to become a soldier, returns to visit his aunt and uncle. His experience of life away from the village and his success in the army lead to shock at their poverty, and he declares, "It can't go on like this. I've been amazed to see how people live here. Dogs live better than you in the towns."[102] Outraged by his family's miserable state, Jäger rallies the weavers and sparks the revolution. This character—crucially an outsider—calls into question the normalcy of the weavers' conditions and disturbs the audience's complacent acceptance of the inevitability of their misery. In his argument Szondi cites the appearance of Jäger's character and his revelatory reaction as characteristic of the epic that interrupts the self-contained dramatic structure.

Another break in the fluidity of *The Weavers* occurs in Act IV, which takes place in the luxurious home of the factory owner Dreissiger. Act IV pointedly juxtaposes the

[100] Ibid., 227.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Hauptmann, *The Weavers*, 162.

superfluous and extravagant wealth of the factory owners with the poverty of the weavers, intensifying the injustice by way of contrast. The migration of perspective outside the homes of the weavers emphasizes the inequality, breaks dramatic absoluteness, and also offers a specific human source to blame for the oppression of the workers, effectively revealing aspects of the system of exploitation. The audience cannot dismiss the weavers' misfortunes as the natural way of things when confronted with characters like Dreissiger, who aims to preserve an exploitative relationship by underpaying the workers and benefiting ostentatiously from their labor. Hauptmann's inclusion of and narrative emphasis on characters such as Jäger and Dreissiger work towards de-naturalizing the inexorability of the workers' conditions. Jäger's and Dreissiger's points of view, which exist outside those of the weavers, establish these figures as vehicles of Szondi's proposed epic characteristics, which contend with the play's dramatic form.

Szondi identifies the final act of *The Weavers* as the moment during which the dramatic form clashes most jarringly with the epic subject it attempts to contain. Act V moves into the home of an old weaver, Hilse, and his family. The rebellion rages around them, yet Hilse refuses to participate, in part due to his religious convictions. He insists on sitting by a window and continuing to weave, and a stray bullet flies through the window and fatally hits him. He collapses over the loom. The play ends after three more lines of dialogue, during which Hilse's wife and granddaughter confusedly approach his motionless body. As Szondi notes, this ending appeared strange to audiences and critics alike. He attributes its forced and discordant effect to Hauptmann's refusal to abandon the Drama:

> Instead of breaking off with a look at the suppression of the weaver's revolt, thereby sticking to the presentation of their collective destiny and at the same time confirming the epic theme in the formal structure, Hauptmann tried to satisfy the demands of dramatic form—even though it had from the very beginning been cast into doubt by the subject matter.[103]

Szondi construes the ending as Hauptmann's final effort to force the play's complete conformation to the dramatic form. The playwright does not achieve such unity, however, and the tension created by the form-content disjunction alerts viewers to the impossibility of simplifying the realities of working-class oppression into a drama familiar to and easily digested by a bourgeois audience. The epic bursts out of its restrictive dramatic bounds through the characters of Jäger and Dreissiger and in moments like the final scene, leaving audiences confused and unsatisfied.

Conclusion

The Weavers defies classification as a tragedy, despite its Aristotelian and Naturalistic tendencies, and displays crucial characteristics of the epic, as exemplified by its inclusion of a stranger, its revelation of the larger sociopolitical systems that determine the environments of the weavers, and its flawed final attempts to enclose an epic subject within dramatic form. Brecht ultimately asserts an even more fundamental argument against a dramatic interpretation of *The Weavers*, stating, "The bourgeoisie is wrong if it believes the proletariat has a tragedy. The tragic does not only characterize a stabilized society, but also presupposes the concepts of high and low."[104] He continues,

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[103] Szondi, "Theory of the Modern Drama," 228.
[104] Brecht, *Brecht on Art and Politics*, 110.

> The inescapability which is required to initiate the tragic process of sublimation must be an assertion which is opposed by another assertion (namely that of escapability). The tragic fall presupposes the possibility of its negation. The utterly hopeless fall, in which there is no higher interest, presents, of course no possibility of sublimation. . . . My [view] is: the fate of . . . the weavers, etc., can no longer be found tragic, and thus cannot be passed off as tragic either.[105]

The proletariat and its hopeless revolution do not comply with Aristotelian expectations for tragedy. Audiences watch the completion of the rebellion's suppression, and while such an event should result in catharsis and resolution of uncomfortable feelings, the fact that the weavers' cause begins and ends as hopeless deprives audiences of this purgation. Spectators traditionally accumulate feelings of fear and pity as they watch a hero rise and then fall, but because of the proletariat's meager social status and lack of power, the mass of weavers can never rise and therefore never fall. Both trajectories function within variations of determinism but with different effects. In a tragedy, fatalism leads to a satisfying, expected resolution of problems in which the catharsis depends on the hero's having risen before his defeat. A Naturalistic drama like *The Weavers*, on the other hand, makes emotional release impossible, as the play does not allow the audience to hope. No tragic change in fate occurs to offer an emotional purgation, which renders *The Weavers* decidedly not tragic.

Brecht situates *The Weavers* in neither drama nor epic but in Naturalist theatre, a categorization that signifies the ways in which the play tries to diverge from the dramatic towards the epic but does not entirely succeed. This is the crucial effect of *The Weavers*:

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[105] Ibid.

its venture into the epic alerts audience members of the incompatibility of new socially engaged content, such as a weavers' rebellion, and traditional dramatic form. While Naturalist theatre retains aspects of drama damaging to the development of social consciousness—namely fatalism—it broaches the realm of the epic and incorporates important epic characteristics. Through works like Hauptmann's *The Weavers*, audiences begin to develop an awareness of the sociopolitical systems that actively determine the conditions of the working classes.

***A Weavers' Rebellion* (*Ein Weberaufstand*)**

Fig. 1 *Need* (*Not*), lithograph, 15.3 x 15.3 cm, 1897.

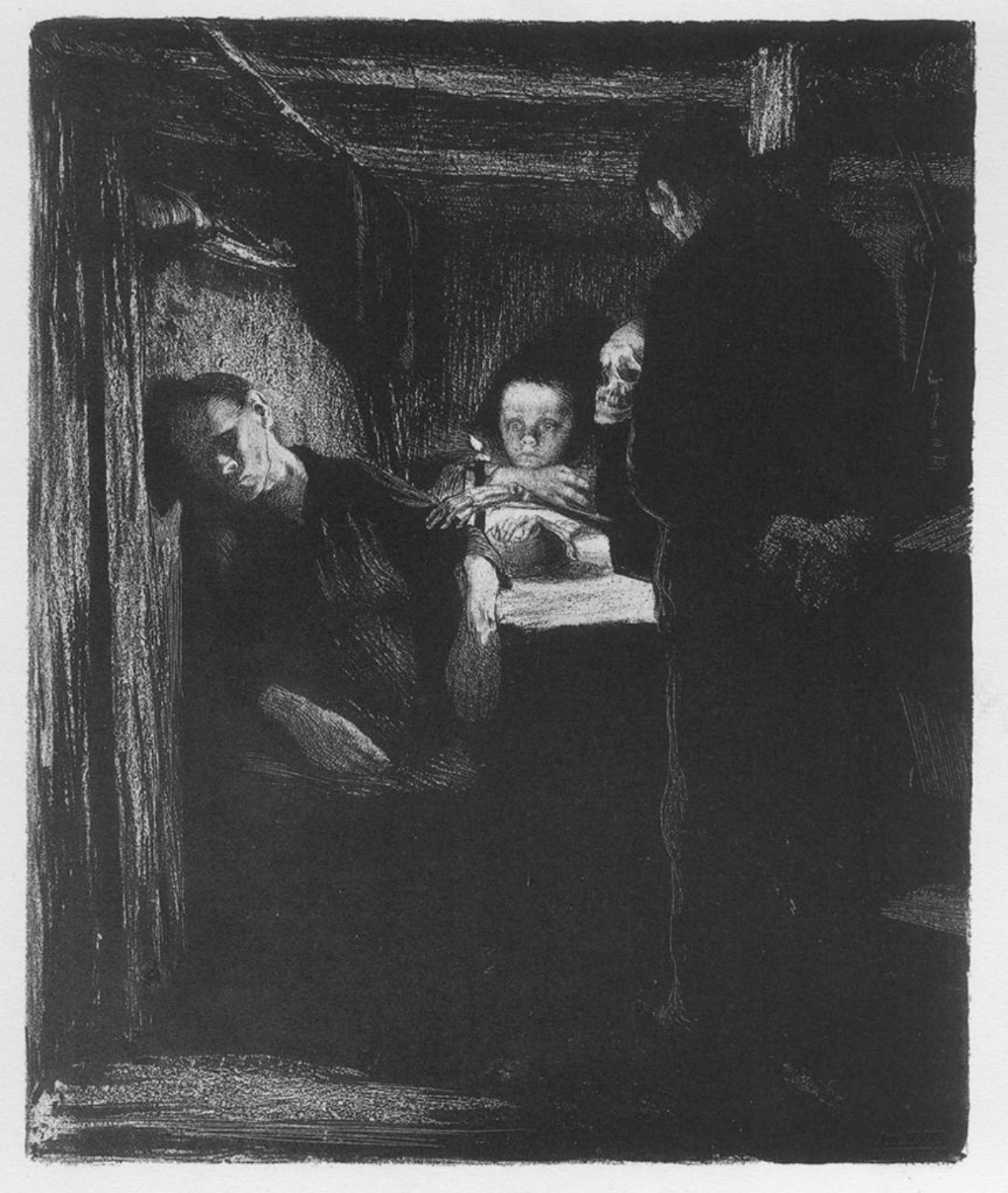

Fig. 2 *Death* (*Tod*), lithograph, 22.8 x 18.3 cm, 1897.

Fig. 3 *Council* (*Beratung*), lithograph, 27.2 x 16.7 cm, 1897.

Fig. 4 *March of the Weavers* (*Weberzug*), etching, 21.6 x 29.5 cm, 1897.

Fig. 5 *Storming the Gate* (*Sturm*), etching, 23.7 x 29.5 cm, 1897.

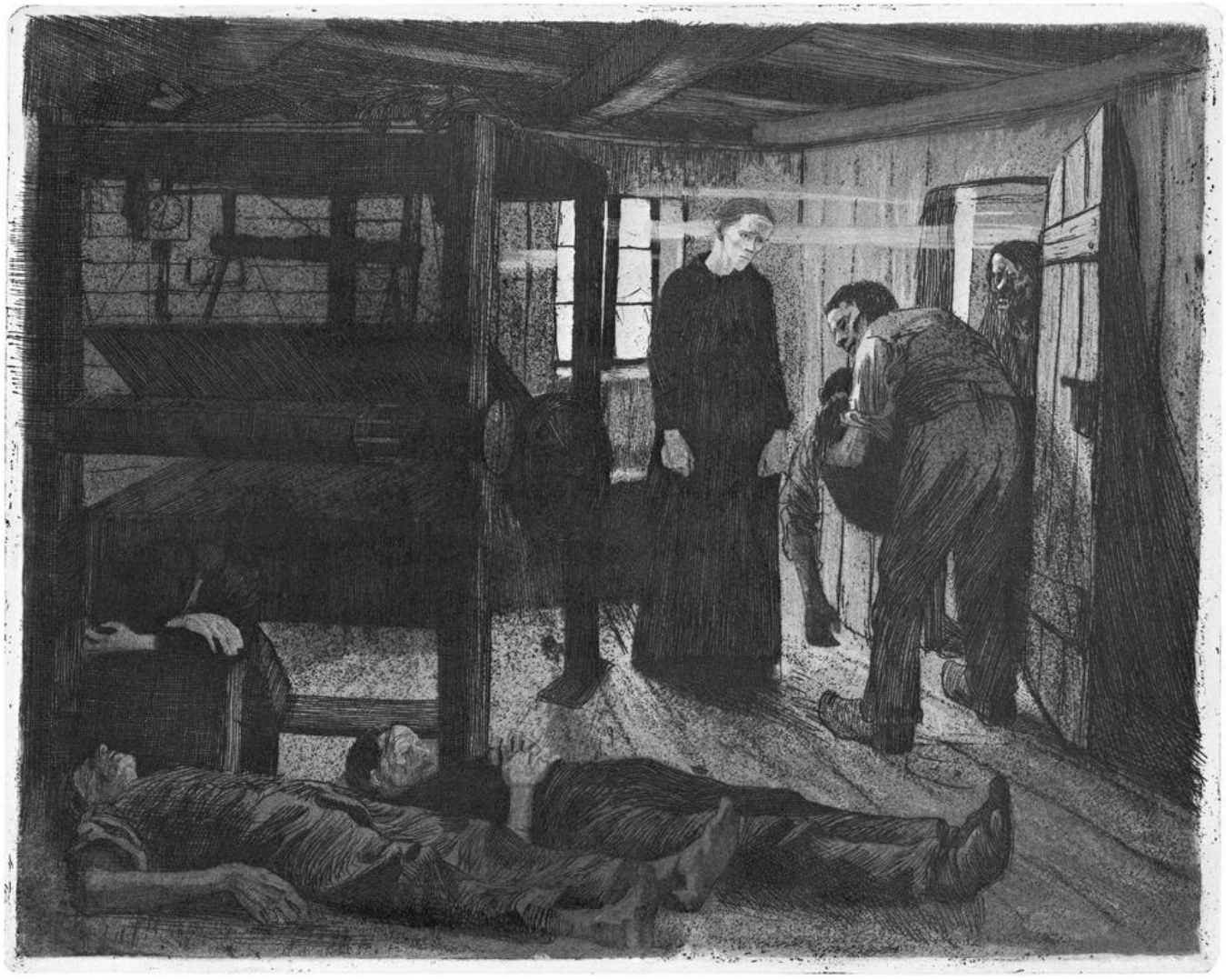

Fig. 6 *End* (*Ende*), etching and aquatint, 24.0 x 29.7 cm, 1897.

Chapter Two:
Drama and Epic in Kollwitz's *A Weavers' Rebellion* (1893-97)

Introduction

Many of Brecht's and Szondi's assertions about Hauptmann's *The Weavers* apply to Kollwitz's *A Weavers' Rebellion*, which demands analogous scrutiny. A similar interpretation of the work as tragic and politically de-contextualized threatens Kollwitz's cycle. The first part of this chapter describes the overwhelming majority of scholarly analyses and critical responses that deem Kollwitz—and *A Weavers' Rebellion* in particular—tragic, commenting principally on the sympathetic qualities of the images. Kollwitz's own self-proclaimed reasons for portraying the working classes render her motives ambiguous as well, and the tragic characteristics she invokes in the cycle through absoluteness, predominance of interpersonal relationships, and empathic effects of her compositional and medial techniques suggest a dramatic reading of the cycle as a whole. The second half of the chapter reassesses this purely tragic interpretation, exploring the Naturalist features of the cycle that lead to more epic considerations. The break in technique between lithography and etching that occurs halfway through *A Weavers' Rebellion*—a shift only superficially analyzed in other critiques of Kollwitz's art—physically signals this dramatic-epic movement, resulting in a print cycle that provokes consciousness of the structural forces governing society.

Reading *A Weavers' Rebellion* as Tragedy

Scholars and critics often classify Kollwitz as an artist "consumed with pity for the poor of her city,"[106] whose "vision is earthbound and tragic."[107] While it is unlikely that such responses consider these terms in light of classical Brechtian or Aristotelian theatre theory, the prevalence of these and similar sentiments in books, journal articles, and newspaper stories remains significant. Countless sources cite Kollwitz's work as "sympathetic,"[108] "compassionate,"[109] and "tragic,"[110] or they employ similar language that reinforces classically dramatic interpretations: "All her art themes are intense and dramatic";[111] "Art that can leave us shaken, that can tear and search our hearts with indignation and pity, that can purge and ennoble";[112] "It is so personal, so instinct with sympathy, so full of a deep and enduring humanity, so tragic";[113] "She had the 'tragic sense of life'";[114] "Her ability to wring drama from composition";[115] et cetera. The

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[106] White, "Interpreter of Life."
[107] Harris and Nochlin, *Women Artists*, 263.
[108] See, for example: Prelinger, "Kollwitz Reconsidered," 68-69; Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 275; Klein and Klein, *Käthe Kollwitz*, 33; Edward Alden Jewell, "The Human Art of Kaethe Kollwitz: Prints and Drawings by the Profound German Artist, Exhibited At Hudson Walker's, Reveal Her Searching Sympathies," *New York Times*, April 11, 1937.
[109] See, for example: Klein and Klein, *Käthe Kollwitz*, 92; Tom Fecht, ed., *Käthe Kollwitz: Works in Color*, trans. A. S. Wensinger and R. H. Wood (New York: Schocken Books, 1988), 4; David L. Shirley, "At the State Museum, Inspiring Prints by Kaethe Kollwitz," *New York Times*, February 11, 1979; John Canaday, "Tragic World of Kaethe Kollwitz," *New York Times*, November 5, 1961.
[110] See, for example: Howard Devree, "A Ringing Challenge to Revolt," *New York Times*, December 15, 1946; "Prints by Kollwitz: 40 Drawings by German Artist Display Tragic Sense, Power and Compassion," *New York Times*, February 8, 1957; Ferdinand Protzman, "Going to the Heart Of the Human Condition; At Robert Brown, Enduring Lessons from Kaethe Kollwitz," *The Washington Post*, April 23, 1998.
[111] White, "Interpreter of Life."
[112] Jewell, "The Human Art of Kaethe Kollwitz."
[113] Howard Devree, "Kathe Kollwitz: Friend of Humanity: An exhibition of the late artist's works recalls an epic of struggle and courage," *New York Times*, November 18, 1945.
[114] "Prints by Kollwitz."

frequency and similarity of such responses demonstrates the extent to which tragic readings dominate Kollwitz's art.

In addition to these numerous declarations of Kollwitz's oeuvre as tragic, more specific discussions of *A Weavers' Rebellion* reveal the immediately evident dramatic tendencies of the work. In most descriptions of the cycle, scholars accentuate its drama to comply with traditional Aristotelian expectations, actively creating a personalized narrative or intensifying the struggle and creating false sensations of hope before the weavers' imminent defeat. McCausland, for example, amplifies the weavers' emotion during the scenes of rebellion: "In *Sturm* they [the weavers] reach the estate and are denied admittance. They clamor at the gates. The women, enraged by years of privation, tear up cobblestones."[116] Kearns also invokes sensational language, describing *March of the Weavers* as "a wave of revolutionary passion. Some [figures] explode with rebellious fire."[117] She details their "bitter righteousness" and "dynamic marching pace."[118] Kearns interprets *Storming the Gate* as "a monument to revolutionary wrath."[119]

White's *The Evening Post* article from 1913 offers an analysis of the cycle that creates an individualized narrative progressing from one scene to the next. The author describes how the woman in *End*

> sums up the whole tragedy in her still face. Nothing is left to her: her child has died of starvation, which incredibly low wages could not prevent; her husband has given his life in the final rousing against the exploiters of

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[115] Sarah Milroy, "Mad shadows; Kaethe Kollwitz explored the scramble for survival within the nightmare of war. A century later, her canvases remain stark reminders of what is at stake when nations go to battle," *The Globe and Mail* (Canada), March 1, 2003.
[116] McCausland, "Käthe Kollwitz," 23.
[117] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz*, 73.
[118] Ibid., 74.
[119] Ibid.

> labor, and she is left alone looking out through the window where his body lies dead among the rioters. She is without child or husband or work or hope.[120]

These interpretations of *A Weavers' Rebellion* suggest both commentators' impulses to read classical tragic arcs into semi-narrative works of art and also the readiness of the cycle to comply with traditional dramatic readings. This easy dramatic reception of *A Weavers' Rebellion* exemplifies Brecht's concern; the work fulfills expectations without prompting reflection on the powers that create those expectations. Viewers absorb the works, purge their unpleasant feelings, register the conditions of the worker as tragic, and learn nothing. Such is the danger of accepting Kollwitz's work and *A Weavers' Rebellion* in particular as merely sympathetic depictions of the lives of the workers.

Kollwitz's art demonstrates further political ambiguity when one considers the reasons behind the artist's initial representation of the working-class. In her *Diary and Letters* Kollwitz writes, "From the first I was strongly attracted to the workman type."[121] She continues, discussing her political and aesthetic motives:

> Unquestionably my work at this time [of *A Weavers' Rebellion*] . . . was in the direction of socialism. But my real motive for choosing my subjects almost exclusively from the life of the workers was that only such subjects gave me in a simple and unqualified way what I felt to be beautiful. . . . But I want to emphasize once more that in the beginning my impulse to

[120] White, "Interpreter of Life."
[121] Kollwitz, *Diary and Letters*, 28.

> represent proletarian life had little to do with pity or sympathy. I simply felt that the life of the workers was beautiful.[122]

In this journal entry the artist reveals the ambivalent nature of her engagement with the working classes, threatening the broader effects of her work. She supports socialist motives and does not work from a stance of pity, but her aestheticization of the workers poses a problem. Lippard concludes, "However sincere, such romantic attitudes verge on a patronizing classicism."[123] These critical responses, scholarly analyses, and excerpts from the artist's diary contribute to an initial and convincing interpretation of *A Weavers' Rebellion* as tragic and socially ineffective. Through the progression of the cycle, however, viewers develop an awareness of the limits of traditional form; epic qualities of the work begin to crack through dramatic restrictiveness, indicated in part through the change in technique from lithography to etching after sheet three. *A Weavers' Rebellion* breaks more cleanly than does Hauptmann's *The Weavers*: the first three sheets (*Need*, *Death*, and *Council*) remain in the space of the tragic while the second half (*March of the Weavers*, *Storming the Gate*, and *End*) read epic, positioning Kollwitz's work more solidly in this new form instead of forcing the ending to comply with traditional expectations.

As Hauptmann's work elicits audience pity through employing classically tragic means such as absoluteness and interpersonal relationships, Kollwitz constructs her cycle—and in particular the first three sheets, *Need*, *Death*, and *Council*—to appeal to viewers' empathy, enfolding them in the weavers' misery to trigger emotional reactions. The first tactic Kollwitz employs to intimately engage viewers is to visually entrap them

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[122] Ibid., 43-44.
[123] Lucy R. Lippard, "Kollwitz: Chiaroscuro," in *Käthe Kollwitz: Graphics, Posters, Drawings*, ed. Renate Hinz and trans. Rita and Robert Kimber (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), viii.

in the lives and spaces of the workers, creating a pictorial absoluteness comparable to that required of the drama. The artist frames the six sheets of *A Weavers' Rebellion* entirely around the weavers' dismal situation, de-contextualizing the first three in particular through avoiding any reference to the exterior world. Kollwitz accomplishes this enclosure in several concrete visual ways: through the physical spaces depicted in the works, which function as restrictive frames similar to theatre sets; through immersive gazes of the figures depicted, which both mimic viewers' engagement with the work and visually imply interpersonal relationships; and through compositional embodiment, which orients images' perspectives to align with those of viewers, now placed in positions of participation and full absorption in the works.

Kollwitz's framing techniques construct dramatic absoluteness while also providing the most immediately engaging visceral effects. In "Theory of the Modern Drama" Szondi describes the importance of restrictive framing in the construction of a drama. He writes, "The 'picture-frame' stage . . . is the only one adequate to the absoluteness of the drama," continuing, "The play sheds its own light on stage."[124] The first three sheets in *A Weavers' Rebellion*, in addition to their literal embodiment of Szondi's criteria as pictures, tightly frame and compose the scenes in the manner of a stage set. This absoluteness, integral to the cycle's initial classification as tragic, serves a double purpose in triggering audience empathy through its associations with confinement. Whenever scenes take place indoors—as is the case with *Need*, *Death*, *Council*, and *End*—the rooms are small, dark, and cramped. Figures often sit or stand in corners below heavy black ceilings that warp inwards, further compressing the interior space. Strong vertical and horizontal strokes with lithography pencil or etching needle create box-like

[124] Szondi, "Theory of the Modern Drama," 195.

rooms that evoke feelings of suffocating enclosure. These architectural effects—in addition to the paucity of windows and doors, whose access, when depicted, is blocked by looms or bodies—envelop viewers in the miserable lives of the weavers.

Kollwitz's images also fulfill Szondi's requirements for internal light sources, further isolating the scenes from outside contexts. In *Need* and *End*, the closed windows on back walls provide the only sources of light. Although windows often inherently imply the existence of an exterior, these windows admit no surrounding environment; their blank, white panes serve a purely illuminative purpose. No mysterious light source filters in from outside the picture plane, and viewers remain enveloped in the self-contained unity of tragedy. The candle in *Death* and the ceiling lamp in *Council* preserve dramatic absoluteness, as well. The solid black walls that together enclose viewers and lithographed figures restrict the world to this indoors, interiorly lit existence. Through her lighting and framing techniques, Kollwitz enforces a mode of quasi-bodily immersion into the space of poverty, death, and hopelessness—with no suggestion, either literally or metaphorically, of an outside.

Kollwitz also engages attention and empathy by incorporating figures whose positions and gazes mimic those of the viewers when looking at the work. This network of gazes simultaneously establishes interpersonal relationships, providing the visual equivalent of dialogue, a crucial element of drama that encourages identification with these figures as individuals who suffer personal tragedies. Both the mother and the figure on the far left side of *Need*, for example, stare despairingly at the dying child. This intensity emotionally grips viewers in the lives of the depicted laborers. In *Death*, the brightly lit eyes of the child and the contrasting empty sockets of Death command

viewers' attention and redirect it towards the dying mother. In these scenes Kollwitz captures viewers' gazes through the absorbing nature of her own figures' stares while creating a visual depiction of interpersonal relations. The implication of dialogue predominates most forcefully in *Council*: the men lean intently across the table with clenched fists, engaging in eye contact and fervid conversation. The title of the image itself, *Beratung*, translated a variety of ways—"guidance," "council," "advice," "debate," "conspiracy"[125]—determinedly signifies language and interaction. Kollwitz's depicted gazes draw viewers' attention, establish interpersonal relationships, and invite identification with the figures as individuals, adhering on multiple levels to the expectations of drama.

In a similar manner Kollwitz arranges the *Weavers* sheets compositionally so that viewers feel physically implicated in scenes, entangling themselves (to revisit Brecht's own language)[126] in the action of the drama instead of thinking critically about the work's larger societal effects. Kollwitz positions the bed in *Need*, for example, at the front edge of the sheet such that viewers are at the bedside of the sick child, sitting directly across from the mother and sharing her agony. In *Council*, the beer glass at the corner of the table rotates towards the front of the picture plane, displaying a handle that invites viewers to join the scene. In *Storming the Gate*, the woman on the right stands visually isolated, both mimicking viewers' relationship to the work in her observance of the action and implying their simultaneous arrival in front of the image. Additionally, the hole in the street that expands with each removed cobblestone stretches towards viewers, placing

[125] "*Beratung*" does not translate literally as "conspiracy," but scholars frequently title the English sheet as such.
[126] Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 78; see also discussion on page 31, this thesis.

them knee-deep in the pit with the hunched woman, who tips precariously into exterior space.

Kollwitz's use of confining, "picture-frame" architecture, mirrored gazes, interpersonal relationships, and embodied perspective works to incorporate and then enclose viewers in the absoluteness of the world of the depicted workers, trigging identification with the figures as well as strong feelings of empathy. These images and their emotional evocations recall strategies characteristic of the tragic drama that Brecht and Szondi describe in their analyses of Hauptmann's *The Weavers*. Both playwright and printmaker appeal to the pity of their audiences by employing these classical dramatic techniques and depicting the extreme conditions of poverty in which the weavers live and work. Kollwitz's cycle in particular, because of its visual medium and spatial proximity to viewers who stand directly before the image, physically immerses viewers in the art and enhances empathic responses.

Kollwitz's *A Weavers' Rebellion* exhibits further tragic aspects in its depiction of the ravaging physical effects of the workers' environment, effects Hauptmann attempts to capture in his stage directions.[127] Kollwitz's weavers stand perpetually hunched, bodies curling into postures that mimic those of their literal back-breaking work. She sketches hollowed cheeks, black pitted eyes, and, as Prelinger suggests, large, work-deformed hands.[128] Scholars' descriptions of the weavers reinforce the de-contextualization of their suffering, implicating no larger powers at work. Lippard, for example, observes tragedy "in the person of each weary woman, bowed under oppression she is helpless to affect

[127] Hauptmann, *The Weavers*, 171; see also discussion on page 40, this thesis.
[128] Prelinger, "Kollwitz Reconsidered," 23.

directly."[129] Hinz remarks on the "body language of the oppressed" and explains that "Kollwitz lays the blame for the uprising on the peasants' catastrophic living and working conditions."[130] A comparable description emerges in Klein and Klein's analysis of the cycle: "The workers appear as products of their miserable lives. . . . Their bodies bear evidence of bad nutrition and unhealthy working conditions."[131] Such evaluations of the workers' lives and sufferings place no responsibility on exterior forces intentionally creating these environments to more effectively exploit working-class labor. Even the looms in *Need* and *Death*, completely integrated into the composition, indicate a causal relationship between weaving and starvation or death without implicating a source greater than the nature of the work. In these ways Kollwitz's cycle aligns with Brecht's remarks, conceding the detrimental influence of the environment on the workers yet portraying their conditions as inevitable and exacerbated only by the repetitiveness and poverty of their lives.

A Weavers' Rebellion's classically tragic characteristics coexist with the Naturalistic predetermination also evident in Hauptmann's *The Weavers*. Such aspects of Naturalism still entrap the working classes in seemingly inescapable situations, but, like *The Weavers*, *A Weavers' Rebellion* succeeds in depriving its viewers of Aristotelian expectations of purged resolution of feeling. This irresolution and engagement with new, socially relevant content shifts the work out of tragedy and towards the epic. Naturalistic determinism develops partially in Kollwitz's lithographic style, which underscores the monotony of the workers' lives in *A Weavers' Rebellion*. Visual repetitions of black and

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[129] Lippard, "Kollwitz," viii.
[130] Renate Hinz, "Introduction," in *Käthe Kollwitz: Graphics, Posters, Drawings*, ed. Renate Hinz and trans. Rita and Robert Kimber (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), xix.
[131] Klein and Klein, *Käthe Kollwitz*, 36-37.

white mimic the unvarying alternations of work, hunger, sleep, and death that constitute the weavers' everyday experiences. To heighten this theme of inescapability, circular imagery appears throughout the cycle: the activity of weaving itself is repetitive—wheels appear centrally in *Need* (the spinning wheel) and in *End* (the wheel attached to the loom), while *End* recalls the subject matter and composition of the first and second sheets. *End* may depict the conclusion of this particular rebellion, but the cycle of work-poverty-death regenerates. The sheet defies the finality of conclusion by completing—or recommencing—the circularity of *A Weavers' Rebellion* as a whole. Weavers and viewers have returned to the circumstances that triggered the rebellion, namely death and the crushingly inescapable magnitude of the looms and their consumption of the weavers' lives. In its portrayal of doomed circularity, Kollwitz's cycle denies easy cathartic resolution.

A Weavers' Rebellion defies dramatic expectations in favor of Naturalist representations in other ways, as well. The title of the cycle causes viewers to anticipate scenes of violent protest, and the names of individual sheets—*Need*, *Death*, *Council*, *March of the Weavers*, *Storming the Gate*, *End*—imply an Aristotelian progression and development of hope, but the images themselves contravene such predictions. The individual sheets present a succession of defeated, pathetic figures, leaving viewers to wait for some spark, some evidence of revolt. By the end of the cycle, the weavers have achieved nothing except a pitiful attempt at protest followed by more death.

Kollwitz depicts no energized marching, fighting, or cathartic culmination of the weavers' struggles. In *March of the Weavers* a child sleeps on her mother's back while rebels trudge forward with hands in their pockets and hopeless eyes. Their feet drag

through mud, and the group marches downwards, sinking under wearied weight, a foreshadowing of their impending failure. In *Storming the Gate*, figures remain hunched even as they attack, and the woman in the foreground bends crippled under the weight of the stones in her apron. She digs and sinks into a grave of her own making, offering each new stone as a weapon that doubly entrenches her and destabilizes the ground on which the group stands. Both crowds of people are thin enough to see through. In German, Kollwitz titles this sheet *Sturm*, literally, "storm," yet she depicts nothing reminiscent of the uncontrollable turbulence or destruction that storms typically invoke. These weavers more closely resemble prisoners clutching at the thick iron bars of a cell, begging for a way out. These details reinforce the presence of a Naturalist determinism that dooms the weavers' rebellion from the start. Instead of crafting a narrative with a classically heroic rise and fall, Kollwitz depicts bleakly monotonous repetitions of misery that offer no hope, release, or resolution.

A Medial Interruption

Kollwitz's refusal to craft an Aristotelian arc over these six sheets results in no moments of catharsis for viewers who witness the weavers' attempts to exact their revenge. The hopelessness of the struggle from the beginning of the cycle recalls Brecht's assertion that the proletariat cannot withstand classification as tragic, as tragedy requires a good fortune—realistically impossible for the working classes—before a change to bad fortune can occur. The deprivation of an expected dramatic trajectory provokes viewers to question the traditional forms to which they have grown accustomed; the cycle's failure to meet expectations challenges viewers to question their responsibility in the

cycle of oppression, poverty, and rebellion, as well as the debilitating effects of larger social structures. This Naturalism-facilitated progression in Kollwitz's *A Weavers' Rebellion* from drama to epic parallels the comparable transition in Hauptmann's *The Weavers*, presenting characteristics of both tragic and epic that coexist in these works.

Dramatic-epic tensions triggered most notably by contradictions in form and content disrupt the seamless progression of Kollwitz's *A Weavers' Rebellion* in a manner analogous to that of Hauptmann's *The Weavers*. Formal qualities that reinforce dramatic unity, such as absoluteness depicted through suffocating, walled confinement and the detrimental yet inescapable effects of the loom give way to epic realizations of social forces. The shift occurs in Kollwitz's change of technique from lithography to etching after sheet three, *Council*. Prelinger notes,

> The use of two media in a single cycle was highly unusual and creates a disjunction, however subtle, between the flow of the story and the mode of realization. Whether intentional or not, the resulting disruption of the narrative forces the viewer to consider the tools by which it was realized, a surprisingly modern and antiliterary device.[132]

This medial transition not only self-referentially calls attention to the process of art-making but also leads viewers to consider the ways in which forms—or, metaphorically, social structures—develop and frame the reception of their content. As previously discussed, the artist's lithographic technique immerses the first half of *A Weavers' Rebellion* in the realm of the tragic, where exaggerated *chiaroscuro* creates a sense of inescapable misery and a rebellion naturalistically doomed from the start. The intimacy of these scenes, each including only four figures, recalls the small casts of characters and

[132] Prelinger, "Kollwitz Reconsidered," 31.

prevalence of interpersonal relationships in drama, and their compositions resemble stage sets with closed spaces and dramatic interior lighting.

Problematic for a purely naturalizing interpretation of Kollwitz's cycle, however, is the artist's change in technique at the exact moment when the weavers' actions enter the epic, enhancing the narrative shift with a technical one. Even the titles themselves suggest a move from interior dynamics to epic actions. *March of the Weavers* and *Storming the Gate* in particular illustrate epic movements of people; the intimacy of *Need*, *Death*, and *Council* give way to lighter images crowded with figures. With its open sky, landscape, and change in directionality, *March of the Weavers* throws into relief the darkness and secrecy of *Council*, which retreats from the viewer while *March* sweeps horizontally across the sheet. Absoluteness and emphasis on interpersonal relationships vanish—figures in sheets four through six barely interact through either implied dialogue or eye contact. Kollwitz's etching technique creates a wider spectrum of grey variations that tone down the starkness of *chiaroscuro*, introducing nuance in chromatic tones that mimics the complexities of the newly visible exterior world. Perspective broadens in the last three sheets to incorporate more figures and expansive backgrounds.

In her diary Kollwitz writes that she changed technique halfway through because she finally felt she had sufficiently mastered etching.[133] Despite the artist's self-proclaimed frustration over not perfecting her skills in etching early enough to complete the entire cycle in one medium, she did not redraft the first three sheets as etchings once she felt secure in the technique. Nor did she accept her original etchings of these first three (ultimately lithographed) sheets, even though, as Carey and Griffiths note, they "are some twenty in number and are of remarkable technical competence and artistic quality;

[133] Kollwitz, *Diary and Letters*, 42.

certainly they give no impression of an artist struggling with the process."[134] Carey and Griffiths elaborate: "Examination of the etched version of *Not* [*Need*] made in 1893-4 . . . shows that the print is perfectly successful, and of fully comparable quality to the three etched plates which were actually published in the series."[135] Carey and Griffiths devote no further consideration to the matter, dismissing the discussion in the next sentence: "Whatever may be the explanation for the abandonment of work on the early versions of the plates . . ."[136]

While some scholars note this change in technique in the manner of Carey and Griffiths (some ignore it altogether[137]), few deliberate on the reasons behind the switch. Klein and Klein, for example, offer an equally insubstantial explanation of the break, venturing a benign interpretation that "one can see that the first three—the lithographs—are somewhat more shadowy and mood-provoking; the final three are more pictorial and precise."[138] Kearns contentedly attributes the disunity to Kollwitz's self-proclaimed incompetency:

> After many disappointing attempts to etch the series, she decided to lithograph some of the prints. . . . After many pulls, the first three lithographs, *Poverty*, *Death*, and *Conspiracy*, printed well. Revitalized, she finished the last three frames as etchings. It is more acceptable, by

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[134] Frances Carey and Antony Griffiths, *The Print in Germany, 1880-1933: The Age of Expressionism* (London: British Museum Publications Ltd., 1984), 62.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid.
[137] For example, a *New York Times* article describes the work as "a series of powerful etchings" ("Interesting Etchings by Kathe Kollwitz on Exhibition in the Print Room of the New York Public Library," *New York Times*, September 1, 1912.). An article by McCausland reads, "*Ein Weberaufstand* [*A Weavers' Rebellion*] is comprised of six etchings" (McCausland, "Käthe Kollwitz," 23.).
[138] Klein and Klein, *Käthe Kollwitz*, 33.

> professional standards, for a graphic series to consist of one medium; however, because she was not—at least, in her own highly critical opinion—technically competent in etching, and because she was determined to complete it, [*A Weavers' Rebellion*] is made up of three lithographs and three etchings.[139]

These casual dismissals of the medium break as inconsequential or based purely on Kollwitz's technical achievements discount its importance in interpreting the cycle and understanding the work's larger movement from dramatic to epic. Both Brecht and Szondi reiterate the imperative of considering form and content equally when analyzing a work of art. Szondi writes, "We must consider form on the same level and as having the same importance as content," continuing by asserting form's "capacity to say something."[140] Brecht proffers similar opinions on these artistic aspects: "Concern with subject and concern with form are complementary."[141] He elaborates,

> Form plays a major role in art. Form isn't everything, but it's so substantial that neglecting it will destroy a work. It isn't something external, something that the artist confers on content, it's so much a part of content that it often comes across to the artist as content itself; because, in the process of making a work of art, certain formal elements usually occur to the artist at the same time as the material, and sometimes even in advance of it.[142]

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[139] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz*, 71.
[140] Szondi, "Theory of the Modern Drama," 192.
[141] Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 24.
[142] Brecht, *Brecht on Art and Politics*, 313.

Scholars who neglect to consider the influence of artistic form and technique when analyzing *A Weavers' Rebellion* sacrifice essential interpretive information. As Brecht and Szondi argue, form communicates meaning as forcefully as does content.

Prelinger suggests a more deliberate rationale behind Kollwitz's choice to preserve the medial divide. In observing that the dismissed etchings "appear extremely successful technically,"[143] Prelinger puzzles over the almost undetectable differences between Kollwitz's preliminary etching of *Need* and the lithographed final draft: "So accomplished is this [etched] technique that it is unclear why she rejected this version, especially when the final lithograph is so similar."[144] Prelinger tentatively suggests that "perhaps the difficulties to which [Kollwitz] referred arose from the tonal and textural processes that were so crucial to her compositions for *A Weavers' Rebellion*."[145]

In this proposition, Prelinger identifies the crucial consideration: on some intentional level, Kollwitz preferred somber, dramatic tones and textures for *Need*, *Death*, and *Council* and clear, epic ones for *March of the Weavers*, *Storming the Gate*, and *End*. This switch from etching to lithography is no mere surface or technical change; the midway disjunction indicates interior tensions cracking through structural barriers. Kollwitz portrays the first half of *A Weavers' Rebellion* as tragic, adhering to many characteristics of drama. At the moment of action, however, the narrative demands broader perspective as the epic subject claims its proper space. The epic forces the split in technique, conveying the incapability of lithography—and the tragic—to communicate the expansiveness and complexity of sociopolitical movements, such as the protest of the weavers against their capitalist oppressors. The break also indicates the broader scope

[143] Prelinger, "Kollwitz Reconsidered," 21.
[144] Ibid., 23.
[145] Ibid., 21.

requisite to expose social structures and pressures maintained by those in power to exploit the working classes. *A Weavers' Rebellion* pushes beyond tragic interpretation and into the epic; although the cycle's Naturalism liberates the work from classical tragedy while retaining aspects of determinism, the cycle expands beyond Naturalistic expression to incorporate significant epic characteristics.

Like Hauptmann's *The Weavers*, Kollwitz's *A Weavers' Rebellion* does not succeed as an entirely epic production. It suggests, however, that the epic subject presented—the plight of the weavers and their uprising—is too large and multifaceted to comply with the narrative expectations of tragedy. The cycle breaks open from the inside, conceding that the oppression of the working classes cannot easily mold into an artistic form that assuages an audience's feelings of discomfort through purgation and resolution. The dramatic-epic conflict in *A Weavers' Rebellion* indicates, in accordance with Brecht's demands, the necessity of developing a new epic form to engage new socially contextualized contents.

Reading *A Weavers' Rebellion* as Epic

Despite the dramatic inclinations of the first three sheets of *A Weavers' Rebellion*, the cycle begins to diverge from traditional expectations of drama after *Council*, when the technique and narrative shift into the realm of the epic. Similar to Hauptmann's *The Weavers*, Kollwitz's work disrupts dramatic absoluteness, admits a plurality of storylines, proceeds narratively through fragmented time and space, and ultimately reveals the effects of societal structures. The artist accomplishes this movement into the epic through

visual means, which operate in ways distinct from those of theatre while providing analogous results.

In addition to introducing numerous figures between sheets three and four—a character growth that identifies the masses as protagonist, indicates the plurality of personal storylines this work encompasses, and avoids orientation around a hero or collection of individuals—Kollwitz visually destroys any semblance of absoluteness. The weavers leave their tightly boxed interiors and traverse open space in *March of the Weavers* while remaining outdoors in *Storming the Gate*. This clear acknowledgement of a world that exists outside the workers' houses immediately breaks from dramatic unity. While the final scene in *End* takes place indoors—typically a sign of the preservation of dramatic absoluteness, particularly in consideration of the first three lithographs—several factors identify this image as arising more from epic motives than dramatic ones. Kollwitz depicts a door, for example, when none of the first sheets include any reference to an exit. Smoke drifts in through this opening, alerting viewers to the presence of continued fighting nearby, and weavers haul in dead bodies from the outside. These details reference events taking place beyond the sphere of this room and disrupt the integrity of dramatic cause-and-effect relationships that remain wholly internal to tragic works. This presentation of figures as engaged in the scene while maintaining connections to an exterior environment permeates the compositions of *March of the Weavers* and *Storming the Gate*, as well. Figures stand on the very edge of these images, often represented as only parts of bodies: a man's leg and bent arm on the right of *March of the Weavers*, a woman's floating head in a polka-dot scarf on the left of *Storming the Gate*, and the head and torso of the man in *End* who carries the wounded weaver's feet.

These figures do not fit within the boundaries of Szondi's "picture-frame" stages, and their partial inclusion in scenes indicate their arrival from—and connections to—somewhere else, an exterior place, and other groups of people. These details highlight the spatial fragmentation that interrupts the preliminary absoluteness of *A Weavers' Rebellion*; after the almost identical darkly lit, cramped interior spaces of *Need*, *Death*, and *Council*, the spatial scope widens and continues disconnectedly, alerting viewers to an epic presence piecing together the progression of independent scenes.

Kollwitz's cycle also develops through fragmented time, ignoring the linearity requisite for Aristotelian drama. As Prelinger notes, "The narrative [of *A Weavers' Rebellion*] is further subverted because the episodes are not linked causally."[146] None of the scenes in the cycle immediately succeed one another, and significant time lapses occupy, in particular, the spaces between sheets thee and four and between sheets five and six. Kollwitz omits, for example, many events that would necessarily connect *Council* and *March of the Weavers* such as the completion of a plan, the gathering of other rebels, and the accumulation of weapons. She similarly depicts no counteraction against the weavers' storming of the gate that leads to so many dead and wounded; viewers must fill in the narrative blanks left by the epic *I* and remain conscious of the artistic structure of the work itself.

The fragmentary nature of the visual medium that Kollwitz employs to depict the revolt inherently pushes the work's epic dimensions. The cycle's division into six individually forceful prints adheres to Döblin's requirement that an epic work survive scissored separation; each scene, physically detached from its neighbors, remains

[146] Ibid., 31.

independently successful, "fully capable of life."[147] Prelinger describes this intentionally detached effect in other words: "In *A Weavers' Rebellion*, there is no strict narrative or literary thread; rather, the cycle is episodic."[148] She writes that Kollwitz develops "an epic suite of images linked by ideas."[149] In addition to the innately fragmentary character of the cycle format, the print medium itself contributes to the cycle's epic qualities. Prelinger calls attention to the influence of Max Klinger (1857-1920), a German Symbolist printmaker, painter, and writer, on Kollwitz's development as a graphic artist: "Klinger perceived the graphic arts to be uniquely suited to the creation of a monochromatic cycle of images, within which a piece of life might be unfolded, might expand itself in 'epic' fashion."[150] The disjointed character of the print cycle as well as its black-and-white medium shift the cycle into the epic realm.

In addition to complying with these broader qualities of epic theatre, Kollwitz's *A Weavers' Rebellion* fulfills several of the epic characteristics Szondi enumerates in Hauptmann's *The Weavers*, most notably "review; . . . the manner in which each act begins anew; the introduction of new characters in every act; the way in which the uprising is followed as it spreads."[151] In Hauptmann's play, review takes place in the first act, when weavers deliver their goods to the factory owners' house and "present themselves along with their wares."[152] No comparable presentation of woven products opens *A Weavers' Rebellion*, but Kollwitz's first two images of mourning families offer

[147] Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 70.
[148] Prelinger, "Kollwitz Reconsidered," 34.
[149] Ibid., 21.
[150] Ibid., 15.
[151] Szondi, "Theory of the Modern Drama," 227.
[152] Ibid., 226.

"the introduction of the weavers and their misery,"[153] comprising her version of a review. The previously discussed fragmentary aspects of the cycle, both spatial and temporal, create the impression of each scene beginning anew, and different figures appear in each sheet. The prints follow the spread of the rebellion from its initial stages of planning through the weavers' march, attack, and defeat. All of these invocations of the epic, either generally or in relation to specific qualities of Hauptmann's play, contribute to Kollwitz's transition from drama to epic, signaled initially and formally in the midway technique change from lithography to etching.

In *A Weavers' Rebellion* Kollwitz also engages the epic by visually signaling the causal relationship between exploitative sociopolitical structures and the weavers' poverty. Kollwitz more subtly incorporates a glimpse of the oppressors into her cycle than does Hauptmann in *The Weavers*. The artist never presents the human forms of the factory owners, but she offers a depiction of their house, which contrasts strikingly with the workers' hovels, shocking viewers into contemplating the reasons behind such a disparity. The top ridge of the stone wall guarding the mansion rises higher than the ceilings of the weavers' homes, an inequality emphasized through a comparison of the women figures in *Storming the Gate* and in *End*: the gate dwarfs the woman arriving with her two children in *Storming*, while the mourning woman's head in *End* nearly reaches the ceiling sagging above her. The windows serve to accentuate another notable disjunction in the represented living conditions of these two classes. Only two weavers' interiors include a window, obscured by shadows and looms, while the owners' house boasts twenty decorative windows on the stretch of façade visible through the gate's archway. The gate's delicate ironwork similarly mocks the rough sparsity of the weavers'

[153] Ibid.

homes; such material differences unsettle viewers, absorbed until sheet five in depictions of unbearable impoverishment. The juxtaposition of poverty and exorbitant wealth in *Storming the Gate* ultimately links the weavers' suffering to human causes and disrupts the natural flow of Kollwitz's cycle—and of working-class oppression—as a whole.

The intricacies of the ironwork also accentuate the naturalizing effects of oppressive sociopolitical structures when compared to the scribbles to the right of the house and above the stone wall, which Prelinger identifies as a tree. She attributes this striking disparity in detail to Kollwitz's lack of interest in depicting nature:

> The loose wash evocation of trees above the garden wall in the preparatory drawing has become a flourish of emery dots and a few lyrical, etched scratches. Kollwitz's interest in depicting vegetation was so minimal that it is not surprising to see her treat real nature with a few abstract squiggles while simultaneously minutely detailing the iron tendrils of the elaborate gate.[154]

If this abstract conglomeration of lines and shading does stand for a garden, its juxtaposition with the hyper-detailed, human-made ironwork may have more political significance than Prelinger suggests. The visual contrast between manufactured gate and natural garden signifies the ways in which the factory owners, and by extension the collective mass of oppressors who determine the conditions of the workers, effectively remake nature for their benefit. The upper classes repackage oppression as natural, persistently reinforcing its inescapability. The ironwork and the naturalized exploitation it represents transform real nature into a caricature of itself, almost unrecognizable.

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[154] Elizabeth Prelinger, "Annotated Checklist," in *Käthe Kollwitz*, ed. Elizabeth Prelinger (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, Washington / New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 143.

The shape of the owners' gate also provokes consideration of social powers, emphasizing the correlative relationship between the exploitation of the weavers and the luxury against which they protest. Brecht demands that the epic allow "the audience to see that human beings are conditioned by specific societal relationships,"[155] and Kollwitz's image visually communicates the forced conditioning of the weavers by the factory owners. The solid black arch of the gate parallels the curve of the group's collective hunch, as well as the bowed backs of each individual; the iron crushes and molds the weavers under the weight of the riches their work continues to supply. The physical crippling manifested in this causal relationship transfers blame for their deformation and suffering from their vaguely unavoidable environment to the specific family that owns the factory and demands ceaseless production. The anonymity of the factory owners extends the metaphor beyond this specific community of weavers to the larger sociopolitical pressures and constructions created and maintained by those in power and forced upon the working classes, continually reinforced and construed as natural.

This graphic elucidation of social and political systems transfers to the imagery of the last sheet, *End*, and depends upon the altered representation of the loom. In *Need* and *Death*, the looms occupy background space in the weavers' homes. They exist as part of the determining environment and assume responsibility for the depicted deaths—in *Death*, the skeleton seems to emerge out of the loom itself. The incorporation of looms into these scenes suggests that the inescapable cycle of poverty and death has no greater source than the nature of the weavers' work, detaching personal misery from exterior causes. In *End*, however, epic contexts and a juxtaposition with the factory owners' gate recasts the

[155] Brecht, *Brecht on Art and Politics,* 207.

loom's significance. In direct contrast to the darkly shadowed, obscured machines in the first sheets, this loom visually dominates the scene. Its surprising size shrinks the already limited space of the room. Most importantly, its shape and location recalls the wrought iron gate of the previous sheet: both gate and loom occupy the middle-left area of the composition with thick, weighted bars and appear to crush the bodies of the weavers below. The horizontal wooden frame of the loom runs parallel to the floor and the bodies of dead weavers in a relationship analogous to the way the gate arches above the hunched rebels. The unexpected clarity and dominance of the loom in *End* forces a re-evaluation of its purpose and leads to the development of new interpretations of its significance based on the machine's close association with the iron gate. This change in representation coupled with the visual linking of the loom and a previously established sign of oppression identifies weaving as a means of socially imposed exploitation. Further associations between the loom and society arise as a result of the smoke that drifts in through the room's open door, connecting the wooden frame with the world beyond. Viewers recognize that outside this room a rebellion rages against the sociopolitical structures that impose such miserable lives and working conditions upon the proletariat.

In effecting this recognition of the loom as an instrument of intentionally structured class oppression, Kollwitz shifts her work from the tragic to the epic. *A Weavers' Rebellion*, like Hauptmann's *The Weavers*, retains dramatic aspects that initially render the cycle tragic and limit its contextual significance. However, the epic nature of its socially conscious content ultimately breaks the fluidity and absoluteness of the narrative; the work cannot effectively proceed according to traditional expectations.

As with Hauptmann, this problematization of classical tragedy as a form capable of framing modern contents remains a crucial aspect of *A Weavers' Rebellion*.

Conclusion

In accordance with Brecht's demands for a reconsideration of nineteenth-century European art, Hauptmann's *The Weavers* and Kollwitz's *A Weavers' Rebellion* exemplify the need for artists to carefully consider and potentially change the relationship between form and contemporary content in their works. While neither play nor cycle transitions completely from drama to epic, each exposes the impossibilities of condensing the social struggles of working-class masses into Aristotelian narrative arcs defined by audience pity and cathartic resolution.

Brecht identifies Naturalism as the style that begins the movement of theatre and art from drama into epic, shifting expectations of content to include realistic portrayals of working-class conditions and rejecting the passive resolution experienced through tragic catharsis. While aspects of Naturalism—such as its inherent determinism and often unclear identification of sources of oppression—controvert certain epic aims, the Naturalistic qualities of *The Weavers* and *A Weavers' Rebellion* succeed in challenging the upper classes and those in governmental positions of power who most prominently contribute to the oppression of the working classes, as evidenced by the state's reception of both works. Carey and Griffiths outline the effects of the controversial staging of *The Weavers*:

> The first version [of the play], written in a strong Silesian dialect, was not passed for performance by the censorship; it was held to instill class-hatred, and it was feared that the dialect was intended to make the play more comprehensible to contemporary weavers and thus encourage

> disaffection. A second version with much less dialect was also banned (a verdict against which Hauptmann later successfully appealed in the courts).[156]

As a result of the state's ban the Freie Bühne, an independent theatre company in Berlin,[157] staged the first production of *The Weavers* in 1893. Kollwitz attended this performance and began work on her cycle immediately afterwards.

Kollwitz's *A Weavers' Rebellion* faced similar governmental disapproval. A friend of the artist submitted the cycle to the state's annual salon in 1898, the Great Berlin Art Exhibition, and the jury, on which Adolf Menzel[158] served, voted to award *A Weavers' Rebellion* the gold medal. Their recommendation, forwarded through the minister of culture, arrived to Kaiser Wilhelm II with a note: "In view of the subject of that work, and of its naturalistic execution, entirely lacking in mitigating or conciliatory elements, I do not believe that I can recommend it for explicit recognition by the state."[159] The Kaiser, operating on either his own instincts or those of the minister, vetoed the jury's decision to award Kollwitz's cycle a prize. These official rejections of *The Weavers* and *A Weavers' Rebellion* indicate the extent to which the works' Naturalism unsettles figures in power, implicating their participation in the continued oppression of working-class people. Although the play and cycle do not expose social forces as blatantly as would thoroughly epic works, their refusal to fulfill traditional dramatic expectations in favor of provoking a prevailing irresolution deprives audiences of the

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[156] Carey and Griffiths, *The Print in Germany*, 60-61.
[157] "Freie Bühne," Britannica Online Encyclopedia, accessed March 22, 2015, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/218804/Freie-Buhne.
[158] Menzel (1815-1905) was a German Realist artist known for his drawings, etchings, and paintings.
[159] Carey and Griffiths, *The Print in Germany*, 61.

"mitigating or conciliatory" tragic elements of, for example, empathy and catharsis expected in traditional narrative arts. Government dissatisfaction with play and print cycle confirms the divergence of Hauptmann's and Kollwitz's works from established artistic form and content and into new, epic territory.

The attempts of each work to develop greater social consciousness, evidenced in large part by internal epic-dramatic tensions, differ in approach and result in varying degrees of lasting epic effect. Hauptmann's *The Weavers*, as Szondi describes, concludes in a dramatic manner that in many ways self-reflexively undermines the work's progression into the epic. The final act, in which the narrative abandons epic scenes of mob rebellion, returns to a weaver's home and re-establishes the dominance of dialogue, interpersonal relationships, and individual tragedy. The scene revolves around the interactions of several family members and the startling death of their patriarch from a stray bullet that flies through the window. The bullet's entry does suggest an exterior world that continues to interrupt dramatic absoluteness, but its intended dramatic purpose remains to create a personal tragedy only tangentially connected to the social struggle. The play does not conclude with a final act of mass rebellion or class consciousness but with an intimate scene driven by interpersonal relationships. Act V contextually detaches from the social relevancy established earlier in the play in an attempt to engage empathy and preserve traditional methods.

Although *The Weavers* concludes with this scene of personal tragedy, the jarring disjunction between Act V and the previous epic characteristics of the work—as well as the tension triggered by the potentially epic entry of the bullet in the tragic final scene—disrupts the fluidity of the narrative, drawing attention to the difficulty of containing the

working-class struggle within dramatic form. Like Kollwitz's change in technique from lithography to etching after *Council*, Hauptmann's break in technical coherency in *The Weavers* interrupts the narrative and contributes to feelings of residual irresolution. Despite these politically engaged effects, the playwright's movement back into drama at the end of the play maintains a partial adherence to tradition and tragedy that renders the work's potential epic aims ambiguous.

Kollwitz's final sheet, *End*, on the other hand, remains within epic space: smoke and bodies entering the room alert viewers to the nearby presence of revolt and these figures' direct involvement in the action, while the shape of the loom recalls that of the factory owners' iron gate, creating clear associations between this machine and the methods of oppression imposed on the working classes by those in power. Unlike Hauptmann, Kollwitz decides to conclude her cycle with a scene of the rebellion's suppression, which, as Szondi argues,[160] confirms a coherency of epic subject and form. Prelinger points out another detail that signals Kollwitz's divergence from Hauptmann's play and her persistent consideration of broader contexts:

> In the process of transferring *End* to the plate for the final etching . . ., Kollwitz altered her interpretation of the cycle and the lesson it was intended to convey. In the study [for the final sheet] the standing woman clasps her hands together, resigned, as the men carry in the slain strikers. In the etching, however, she clenches her fists. . . . Whereas Hauptmann had been criticized at the time of the play's production for not providing a plan for further action on the part of the weavers (and by extension the workers of the world), Kollwitz's small alteration engendered a large

[160] Szondi, "Theory of the Modern Drama," 228; see also discussion on page 44, this thesis.

> change in meaning—from resignation to militant anger—suggesting that in her version these deaths would not go unavenged. With this rhetorical gesture, Kollwitz reformulated the message of the play.[161]

This small but crucial visual change alters the significance of *A Weavers' Rebellion* as a whole and amplifies the differences between Kollwitz's and Hauptmann's works. The resigned, tragic hands of the standing woman turn into active, epic hands; the figures in *End* remain intensely connected to the rebellion, provoking consideration of the print cycle's relationship to the struggles of the working class. The final message of Kollwitz's *A Weavers' Rebellion*, in contrast with Hauptmann's *The Weavers*, remains epic—socially and politically engaged.

Differences in medium contribute to these differences in overall effect between the play and the cycle. Kollwitz's visual technique renders aspects of her work inherently more epic than Hauptmann's *The Weavers*. The fact that the characters in *A Weavers' Rebellion* exist as figures printed on paper and not as human actors slows the empathic process. Works on paper fundamentally diverge from theatre in their means of representation, and viewers have more difficulty identifying with drawn figures than live ones. The cycle's fragmentary nature also directly supports an epic orientation. Not only does Kollwitz's narrative unfold over breakages in time and space, but the work also defies linearity of any kind through each sheet's simultaneous existence. A viewer arriving in front of the series of prints can choose to follow the order of its presentation or to experience the images all at once as one cohesive work in which the actions presented independently occur concurrently (or in reverse order, or in whichever manner a viewer decides). Such manipulation of time and space defies expectations for drama, as does the

[161] Prelinger, "Kollwitz Reconsidered," 26.

cycle's absence of dialogue. Kollwitz depicts interpersonal relationships that mimic acts of dialogue, but this crucial dramatic element cannot drive the narrative of a visual print cycle in the same way it commands a tragic play. Neither work commits fully to the epic form, but these characteristics in Kollwitz's cycle—innate to works of printed art—in addition to the changes in the conclusion of the rebellion, engender a more convincingly epic reading of Kollwitz's *A Weavers' Rebellion* than of Hauptmann's *The Weavers*.

When understood as predominantly epic, Kollwitz's work as a whole functions as an artistic interruption of Hauptmann's play. In both works epic characteristics reveal themselves through moments that disrupt absoluteness and fluidity, such as the appearance of Jäger and the subsequent shift from scenes of the weavers' poverty to the factory owners' ostentatious wealth in *The Weavers* and the lithography-etching shift in *A Weavers' Rebellion*. In Hauptmann's final scene, the bullet's interruption complicates his return to the drama; the playwright attempts to conclude dramatically, but this epic intrusion thwarts closure through its invocation of an exterior world and its consequent irresolution. Kollwitz's act of illustrating the play functions similarly: the artist disrupts the coherency of *The Weavers* as a complete work by introducing a second interpretation of the story in a different medium. Kollwitz appropriates the subject and pushes it further into the epic through her own medial disruptions. *A Weavers' Rebellion* exists as one more epic interruption of an attempted dramatic absoluteness in *The Weavers*, ultimately ending in an epic sphere that more actively encourages sociopolitical engagement.

These variations in the strength of an epic presence in each work anticipate the artistic and political divergence of these artists—both young adults at the time they created *The Weavers* and *A Weavers' Rebellion*, respectively—later on in their careers.

Brecht describes Hauptmann's trajectory after the production of *The Weavers*: "In his further 'development', Hauptmann turned away from realism. The Weimar Republic no longer saw him as a realist, nor even as a Naturalist. . . . Hauptmann became a Fascist."[162] Over time Hauptmann abandons Naturalism and his initial progression into the epic, relinquishing the form most emphatically when accused of producing "undramatic"[163] theatre.

By contrast Kollwitz's art continually develops into epic representations of the working classes. While the reasons behind Kollwitz's attraction to the subject of the workers prove initially problematic, the artist later recognizes and distances herself from her romanticization of the proletariat. Prelinger observes "there is irony in the fact that [*A Weavers' Rebellion*'s] subject, whose success identified her in the public eye as an artist of social engagement, should have stemmed more from literary sources and an aesthetic inclination than from concrete political involvement."[164] Over time, however, as Kollwitz gained additional exposure to the realities of working-class conditions—due largely to the location and patient demographic of her husband's medical practice—her views changed. She began working as a freelance artist for a satirical German magazine, *Simplizissimus*, in 1909[165] and, as Kearns elaborates, "It was during these years of work for *Simplizissimus* that a *human* concern for the proletariat permanently replaced Kollwitz's aesthetic, academic, and—probably—romanticized interest in the working

[162] Brecht, *Brecht on Art and Politics*, 256-257.
[163] Ibid., 72; see also discussion on page 35, this thesis.
[164] Prelinger, "Kollwitz Reconsidered," 76.
[165] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz*, 106.

class."[166] Kollwitz herself, writing reflectively in her journal, details the change in her perception of the workers:

> Much later on, when I became acquainted with the difficulties and tragedies underlying proletarian life, when I met the women who came to my husband for help and so, incidentally, came to me, I was gripped by the full force of the proletarian's fate. Unsolved problems such as prostitution and unemployment grieved and tormented me, and contributed to my feeling that I must keep on with my studies of the lower classes.[167]

The artist's frequent interactions with her husband's working-class patients resulted in an increased awareness of the realities of proletarian life that challenged Kollwitz's preexisting aesthetic assumptions. Elements of Kollwitz's language in this journal entry raise concerns about a persisting belief in a Naturalist determinism influencing the "fate" of the working classes, but the artist expresses a sentiment that evinces her interests in serving the proletariat through her art, portraying their work and life conditions in attempts to engender broader social awareness and change.

Kollwitz also admits the danger of overly dramatized presentations of the proletariat, a realization triggered by a second viewing of *The Weavers*: "When [Kollwitz] attended a performance of Hauptmann's play *The Weavers* again in 1921, almost thirty years after she first was overcome by the drama, she discerned the power of art to transform ugly reality into something deceptively grand."[168] Kollwitz elaborates in a diary entry following her attendance at the play, "When an artist like Hauptmann comes

[166] Ibid. Original emphasis.
[167] Kollwitz, *Diary and Letters*, 43.
[168] Prelinger, "Kollwitz Reconsidered," 79.

along and shows us revolution transfigured by art, we again feel ourselves revolutionaries, again fall for the old deception."[169] Such reactions attest to Kollwitz's matured understanding of the ways in which Hauptmann's play decontextualizes the weavers' revolt, distancing the event from reality in order to enhance its drama. The contrast between Kollwitz's 1921 reflection and her first youthful absorption in Hauptmann's work suggests a development in her own perceptions of the working classes and of the purpose of art that depicts their conditions.

As Kollwitz develops as an artist in the years after *A Weavers' Rebellion*, her work generally advances towards the epic. An increased interest in capturing only the core aspects of a figure, scene, or emotion recalls one of Brecht's definitions about how "epic theatre uses the simplest possible groupings, such as express the event's overall sense."[170] Prelinger's description of Kollwitz's work in the 1920s situates the artist exactly within this criteria: "There is virtually no indication of setting, and the figures have been described just enough to communicate the essentials of the situation."[171] The contour lines in Kollwitz's work become broader, looser, fewer, and rarely depict any background. Figures grow in size, dominating space and communicating only the essentials.

Kollwitz's work also advances in its portrayal of political structures. The artist "pursue[s] her own figurative style and socially engaged themes"[172] and develops away from invoking determinism. During a trip to Russia in the mid-1920s, Kollwitz produced lithographs such as *Listeners* (1927), *Prisoners Listening to Music* (1925), and *Three*

[169] Kollwitz, *Diary and Letters*, 100.
[170] Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 58.
[171] Prelinger, "Kollwitz Reconsidered," 69.
[172] Ibid., 77.

Heads (1925). *Listeners*, for example, "no longer depicts the proletarian in suffering or violent rebellion, but shows instead a human being taking charge of his own fate and intent on catching up on the knowledge and culture of past centuries."[173] This turn away from portrayals of the working classes as stuck in endless rotations of miserable poverty and rebellion suggests Kollwitz's increasing socially conscious artistic goals.

Prelinger similarly discusses Kollwitz's progression towards more forceful political statements in the decade following *A Weavers' Rebellion*, from around 1897 until 1910. She writes,

> During these years as well, the size of the images and the scale of the motifs grew along with the artist's ambition and with her desire to convey a message that was even more insistent than that of the *Weavers* cycle. The small sheets with detailed anecdotalism, relatively speaking, that characterize *A Weavers' Rebellion* evolved into works larger not only in their dimensions but in the way the motif appropriated the page and acquired an iconic presence.[174]

Kollwitz visually emphasizes the essence of a scene in order to intensely communicate socially relevant, epic considerations. These later works diverge from the tragic and deterministic characteristics that linger in *A Weavers' Rebellion*, situating Kollwitz so that she more effectively provokes consciousness of working-class conditions.

Because of the cycle's movement towards the epic and its experimentation with technique, the *Weavers* series anticipates Kollwitz's long-term artistic preoccupations, which progressively incorporate more explicit contemporary relevancy in contrast to the

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[173] Hinz, "Introduction," xxiv.
[174] Prelinger, "Kollwitz Reconsidered," 31.

historical setting of *A Weavers' Rebellion*.[175] Comini describes how the series bears significance in Kollwitz's technical improvement: "The five years she spent refining the compacted images that would emerge in 1897 as the six individual plates for *A Weavers' Rebellion* . . . were also the years that witnessed her self-directed rite of passage from apprentice into master of lithography, etching, and aquatint."[176] Kollwitz's years of experimentation with these print media culminated in a mastery of techniques that she would continue to use and refine for the rest of her life.

A Weavers' Rebellion also served as the work that launched Kollwitz into public attention. The cycle's "bold theme . . . , abbreviated realism of style, and above all its astonishing technical command sent waves of appreciative interest through Berlin's art world."[177] The Berlin Art Exhibition's denial to award the work a gold medal did little to detract from—and even perhaps enhanced[178]—its positive critical reception. After the success of *A Weavers' Rebellion*, Kollwitz received an invitation to teach at the Berlin School for Women Artists, which she had attended as a young artist, and also to join the Berlin Secession the following year.[179] Prelinger describes the effect of this reception on the artist, writing that after the encouraging success of the cycle, Kollwitz "produced some of her finest images."[180] The *Weavers* series marks a crucial moment in Kollwitz's development as an artist as well as her emergence in the public art world. Scholars' neglect of *A Weavers' Rebellion* undermines the importance of the work and limits understanding of its artistic and social significance.

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[175] Noun, *Three Berlin Artists*, 55; see also discussion on page 21, this thesis.
[176] Comini, "Kollwitz in Context," 98.
[177] Ibid., 100.
[178] Prelinger, "Kollwitz Reconsidered," 77.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid., 31.

This project's close examination of *A Weavers' Rebellion*, informed by nineteenth-century European art and theatre theory as well as by the cycle's principal source of inspiration, offers an example of the kinds of interpretive analyses possible to construct around an in-depth visual study of Kollwitz's artworks. Such careful consideration of the images responds to McCausland's appeal to "study the prints"[181] and serves as a counterpoint to the myriad assessments of Kollwitz's art that overvalue interpretations based on emotionality and reductive understandings of feminism, including those of Zigrosser, who considers Kollwitz's "maternal viewpoint" her "greatest contribution";[182] White, who locates the power of Kollwitz's work in the "woman's point of view";[183] and Kearns, who privileges Kollwitz's womanhood over her identity as artist.[184] While the feminist movement helped to revive Kollwitz's reputation, the conflation of the artist's life and works by so many scholars and critics restricts the potential scope of Kollwitz's significance. Meticulous scrutiny of formal techniques and content, as well as of the interaction between the two in specific works of art, accords Kollwitz the respect she merits as a well-trained, versatile, and accomplished artist while yielding a more thorough understanding of her oeuvre and its role in contemporary sociopolitical contexts.

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[181] McCausland, "Käthe Kollwitz," 25; see also discussion on pages 11-12, this thesis.
[182] Zigrosser, *Käthe Kollwitz*, 9; see also page 10, this thesis.
[183] White, "Interpreter of Life"; see also page 10, this thesis.
[184] See page 9, this thesis.

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